



BLUE AND GRAY

WEEKLY



Stories of Brave Northern and Southern Boys in the Civil War.

Issued Weekly—By Subscription \$2.50 per year. Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1904 by Frank Tousey, 24 Union Square, New York.

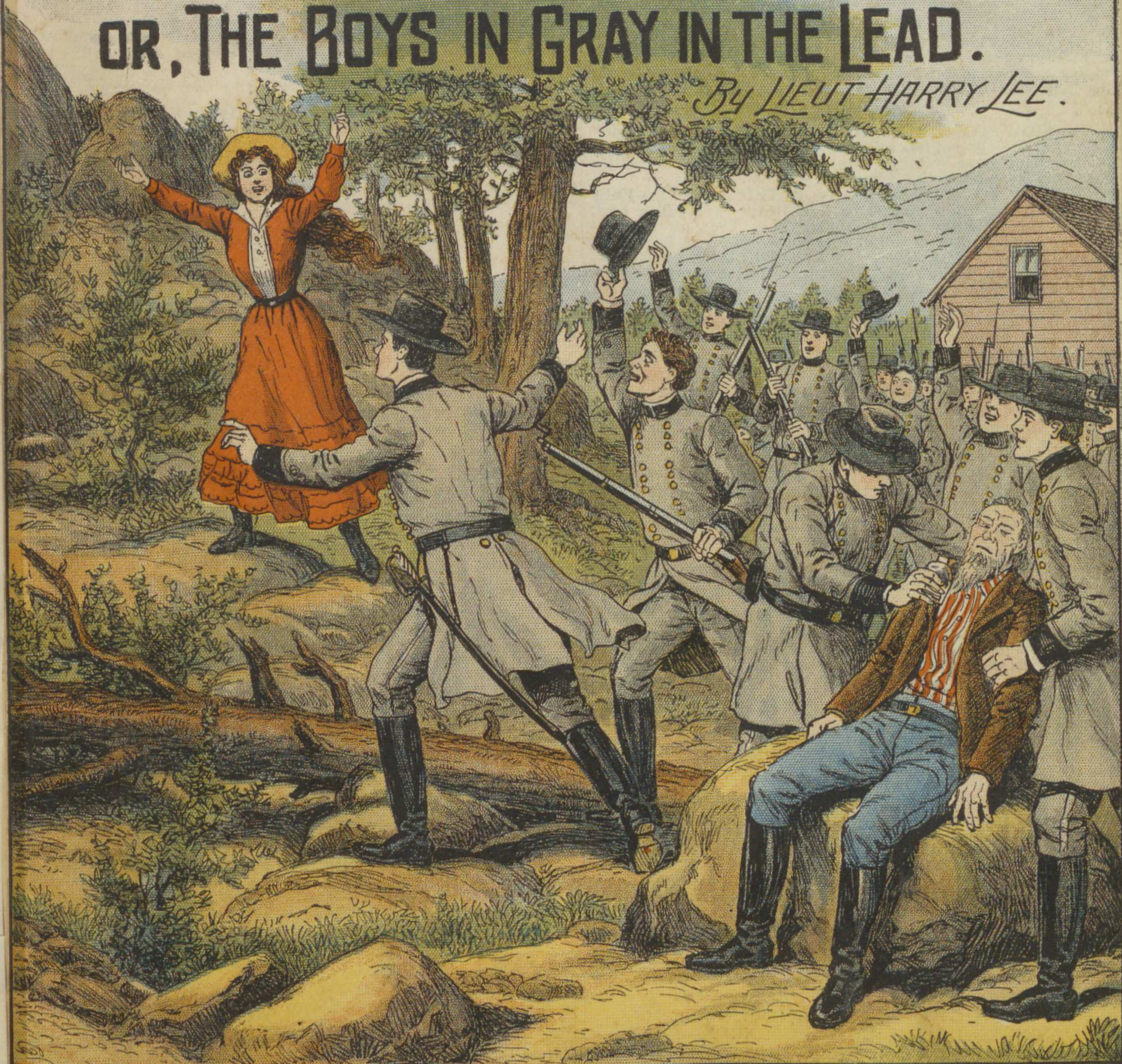
No. 18.

NEW YORK, DECEMBER 9, 1904.

Price 5 Cents.

WINNING THE DAY; OR, THE BOYS IN GRAY IN THE LEAD.

By LIEUT HARRY LEE.



It was plain that Cy Frame could go no further. At this juncture Enid, his pretty grand-daughter, sprang up and cried: "Boys in Gray, I am a daughter of the Confederacy! I will lead you!"

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(Continued on page 3 of cover.)

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CHAPTER I.

THE ESCAPED PRISONER.

McClellan's attempt to take Richmond was plainly a failure. The magnificent Army of the Potomac had fought fiercely in the jungles of the Chickahominy, facing the enemy's guns at Fair Oaks and Mechanicsville, only to at last start on that terrible and disgraceful retreat to Harrison's Landing.

Many a Union veteran to-day will recall the incidents of the Seven Days' Battles before Richmond with tingling veins, but much of disappointment. The brave troops under Lee and Longstreet, Magruder and Hill were flushed with well-earned victory, and Richmond was in a furore when McClellan finally withdrew to his trenches at Washington.

And certainly the people of the Confederacy had good reason to rejoice.

One of the most magnificent armies ever put into the field had been repelled by their raw troops. Their capital remained safe, and their generals could rest with honor upon their well-earned laurels.

Yet the civil war had only just begun. The Peninsular

campaign of McClellan was a failure. The people of the Confederacy were hopeful.

And among the most confident of all was a small company of youths, who had volunteered to fight for the Confederacy under the name of the Virginia Grays.

They were sons of prominent families in Richmond, and they had fought with valor and success under Beauregard and under Lee.

Their captain was Will Prentiss, the son of Colonel Jeff Prentiss, of President Davis' staff. He was a handsome, manly fellow, and popular with his boys.

His first lieutenant was Fred Randolph, and other officers were Joe Spotswood, first sergeant; Sam Payton, corporal. The second lieutenant was Dick Walton. They were all boys of nerve and pluck.

The Virginia Grays were popular with all, and so high was young Captain Prentiss in the opinion of General Lee that he was almost sure to be the first one called upon in case of important scout duty or a dangerous mission.

The Grays had participated prominently in the pursuit of McClellan's army from the battlefield of the Chickahominy. The morning of the fourth day of the Seven Days' Battles found the Grays, by special orders, on the Williamsburg road and not far from Savage's Station.

They were now detailed on special duty with Magruder's

division. They were on the skirmish line in the early hours of the morning for a while.

Here they as usual rendered a good account of themselves. After a couple of hours of lively fighting along the rear of the retreating columns of Sumner and Heintzelman of the Union army they were called back for rest and rations. It is hardly necessary to say that they were well pleased at this order.

They bivouacked on a little knoll which was not far from the railroad. They could see the railroad station but a short distance away, and the regimental colors of the Union rearguard.

But they were yet sufficiently far away to be made safe from musket shot, and, as it happened, the artillery of the foe was silent.

The Grays were glad to roll on the ground and rest, as well as drink their coffee and munch at their hardtack and salt pork.

Will Prentiss and his young lieutenant, Fred Randolph, however, were busy studying the maps and discussing the plans for the day. They were thus engaged when an orderly dashed up.

"Captain Prentiss," he called, "dispatch from General Magruder."

"The deuce!" exclaimed Fred. "I hope he don't intend to call us back into action! We need rest."

"We shall see," said Will. He opened the dispatch and read:

"CAPTAIN PRENTISS:—

"A Union officer, paroled by us yesterday, has played us a treacherous game. He managed to steal into General Longstreet's tent and abstract valuable papers and plans of the Richmond defences. If these fall into the hands of the enemy it may mean defeat and the fall of Richmond. It is highly important that he be recaptured. It is believed that he has gone south into the White Oak swamp and is making for the Union lines by way of the Charles City road at Frazier's farm. It is certain that he means to break his parole, and he must be recaptured at all costs. As soon as your command is recovered from its exhaustion I wish you would take the trail of this fellow, and, if possible, head him off. His name is Lieutenant James Steele. I enclose a description of his person in detail.

"Signed:

"MAGRUDER."

Will Prentiss whistled softly and handed the dispatch to Fred. The young lieutenant of the Grays read it.

He looked at his young captain in a comprehensive way.

"It's Jim Steele!" he exclaimed. "What else could you expect of him?"

"That is true," said Will, reflectively. "I always thought he would turn out in some such way. I would not trust him the length of my finger. He is as treacherous as a snake."

"That is true!"

"Do you remember, when we were at school at Fairdale, how the students' rooms were mysteriously robbed?"

"Yes."

"I have always believed Steele was the guilty party. I am sure I saw him with a pocket knife that belonged to me. So he got to be a lieutenant in the Union army, eh? And, breaking his parole, he steals valuable papers from General Longstreet? We must catch him!"

"It looks like a bad job."

"Nonsense! We can and must do it. The tip is that he has gone into the White Oak swamp. Well, my plan is to cut around at once to the Charles City road and head him off."

Fred rubbed his chin reflectively.

"By Jingo, that's a little bit hard on the boys! They haven't had much rest."

"They shall have their rest," said the boy captain, positively. "We will not start until about ten o'clock. That will give them yet two hours. Let every one improve the time."

"But that two hours may enable the villain to escape."

"I hardly believe it. He must pass through the swamp first, and he will find that no easy task."

Fred said no more, but walked away. The order was given that the company must be ready to march in two hours. At this the camp grew quiet. Nearly all of the boys indulged in sleep.

Will Prentiss, in his turn, took a brief nap. But he was up again soon and ready. He busied himself in outlining a plan for the capture of the fugitive spy.

He was thus engaged, when the hail of the sentry nearby caused him to turn:

"Halt!"

"I tell ye I want to see the captain of this company. I ain't got no countersign, but jest tell him that Cy Frame wants ter see him."

The guard had barred the way with his musket. Will Prentiss saw the powerful figure of a man of the mountaineer type of Virginia. With him was a young girl, who was quite pretty.

"That's right, grandfather," she cried. "And when he hears your name he will see you at once."

"I reckon he will," cried the mountaineer. "Now, mister guard, jest tell him old Cy Frame wants to see him."

In an instant Will Prentiss started forward. He held up his hand just as the guard said:

"You can't pass without the countersign. The captain is resting just now, and you will have to apply later."

"But I tell ye it may be too late," insisted the old mountaineer. "I've got to see him now."

"All right, Cy Frame," cried Will, in a cheery voice. "Let him pass, guard, he is all right."

The mountaineer shaded his eyes with his hand, and exclaimed:

"Bless my stars! It's Jeff's boy, as sure as ye live, Enid. Ain't he a fine lookin' sojer. Ah, I'm glad to see ye, boy. This is my granddarter, Enid May."

Will bowed courteously, and the young girl blushed prettily. She dropped a curtsy.

"I am honored greatly," said Will, in his most gallant

manner. "I am glad to see you both. I haven't forgotten the fishing trips we used to have, Uncle Cy."

"I told ye ther boy would remember me, Enid!" chuckled the old man. "Ain't he a pooty chap now with thet handsome uniform on? A captain, eh? Ye'll be a general bye-and-bye."

"Hardly that, Uncle Cy," laughed Will. "But, pray, come into the camp and I will see what I can find for something to eat and drink."

"Don't want nuthin'," protested the mountaineer. "We've jest had our breakfast. But I've got heaps to tell ye."

"Indeed!" said Will, with interest. "Let us hear the story."

"Do ye see them hills over yender?"

"Yes."

"Wall, I lived in a shanty jest over thar on the side of 'em. But I can't live thar agin fer a while, for I've been warned out."

"Warned out?"

"Yas, out of my own homestead. It's a mean thing, to put an old man like me out of his home."

The old man's voice quavered, and there was distress in his face. In a moment Will's sympathy was aroused.

"How does that happen? Who has done so mean a thing as that?"

Cy Frame passed a hand across his brow. He leaned on the muzzle of the gun he carried, and made reply:

"It's ther work of Steve Myrick!"

"Myrick? Oh, you mean the Union guerrilla chief?"

"Yas, he's the chap. Last night he put a notice on my door that we must git out. This morning his men came down and broke the windows, tore away the doors and turned us out at the muzzles of their guns. I'm gettin' old, an' I ain't able to do much at work. Thar's none of my folks left now but Enid hyar. Her father was killed at Ball's Bluff. Her mother died ten years ago. I'm old an' sick, and without a home or a friend."

The old man's voice broke, and he leaned heavily on his gun. In a moment Will Prentiss was by his side, supporting him.

CHAPTER II.

OLD CY'S STORY.

"Don't you say that, Uncle Cy!" he cried. "You did right in coming to me. I'm your friend forever. Cheer up, I'll see that your wrongs are righted!"

"That sounds jest like ye, boy," cried the mountaineer. "Ye're all generosity and goodness. But I couldn't think of callin' on anybody——"

"You can't, eh?" cried Will, heartily. "We'll see about that! I'll ask General Magruder to throw a few regiments over into those hills and drive Myrick out of there. Then you can reclaim your home."

"Ye can't do it," said the old man, positively.

"Can't do it!" exclaimed the boy captain, in surprise.

"No."

"Why not?"

"Bekase, Steve Myrick has got force enough thar to hold them hills agin the hull of Lee's army."

This astonishing statement caused Will to open his eyes wide. But it was plain that the old man was in earnest. For a moment there was silence. Then Will said:

"You astonish me, Cy! I know that Steve Myrick and his Light Horse, as he calls his guerrillas, are slippery, but I can hardly believe that they cannot be easily driven from those hills."

The old man looked about him furtively. Then he lowered his voice.

"That ain't all thar is to it. I know what ther game is, and why they drove me outen my home. I'm loyal to ther Confederacy. Thar's things doin' up in ther hills thar, and they thought I'd tell it, an' they thought right."

Will was instantly interested.

"This begins to look serious," he said, bringing out camp-chairs. "Be seated, both of you. Go on with your story, Uncle Cy."

The mountaineer lowered his voice:

"Boy, let me tell ye that part of McClellan's army is tryin' to rendezvous up thar secretly, and when our divisions have passed on they'll jump out and make a rear attack. It's Myrick's game, and, from what I've heerd, he expects ter git a commission in ther regular army for engineering ther move. I know one full regiment went in thar last night. Myrick's guerrillas are out jest now scouring ther kentry. I know all this, for I climbed up thar and hid in the darkness around their campfires and overheard the talk."

Will Prentiss listened to this startling revelation with the greatest of interest.

"You know that Union regiments are in there now?"

"Yes."

"You have seen them?"

"I have."

"You believe their purpose is to hide there till Magruder has passed, and then spring out and attack him?"

"Yas, that's it."

"What of Myrick all this while?"

"Oh, he's goin' to make a flank movement. He's hidden north with his troop, and he intends to strike a blow when our army is thrown into confusion by the rear attack. You know what Myrick is. He never fights in the open."

Will Prentiss drew a deep breath. This was the most astonishing plot of the enemy that had yet been discovered.

Will saw at once its serious importance. He knew that it was quite a logical thing for the Union generals, Sumner and Heintzelman, to secrete a number of regiments, or even brigades, in the hills and strike a crushing blow at Magruder.

No effort had been made to drive Myrick out of the hills, though Lee knew of his presence there, and meant to give attention to him later, for the reason that other more seri-

ous work than the crushing of a den of guerrillas was in hand.

So it could be seen that Cy Frame's information was of the most valuable. The boy captain's veins tingled.

"Cy," he said, "this has been discovered just in time. It is comparatively easy now to send an overwhelming force into the hills to capture those regiments and baffle the game."

"That's it, boy," cried the old man, eagerly. "Drive 'em out, and then I kin go back to my little home in peace."

Will looked at Enid, and she blushed, shyly. He hesitated a moment.

"Uncle Cy," he said, after a while, "I am going up there to reconnoiter and see if the enemy are really in force there. If so, I will send for reinforcements and force them to surrender."

The mountaineer bowed.

"It's a good plan, my lad," he said, "but ye want to have it approved by Magruder."

Will knew this well enough. Then he gave a start, and a wave of disappointment swept over him.

He remembered the order he had just received to track the escaped prisoner, James Steele. This would send them in an opposite direction and involved a different program.

"Cy," he said, quickly, "I can't do it. I must abandon the plan. I have other orders."

"Other orders!" exclaimed the old man, in dismay.

"Yes. In another hour the Grays must be under way for the White Oak swamp to head off an escaped prisoner, Steele, who is waiting for Sumner or Heintzelman to come along, that he may join them."

Uncle Cy stood silent and dejected. Something like a groan escaped him. Will saw this and understood his feelings. It led him to decide upon a plan.

He stepped forward, and said:

"Uncle Cy, I am going to take you and your story over to General Magruder. He can then assign some other company to reconnoiter the hills."

The old man's face grew brighter. He offered no objections, and the young girl took his arm, and they followed Will down the company street.

It was some distance to the headquarters of Magruder. But they quickly reached the general's tent.

The general frowned a little when he saw Will.

"Well, Prentiss," he said, "what is this? I sent you orders to head off the escaped prisoner, Steele. You have not heeded them."

"General Magruder," said Will, "I received your orders just as my company, exhausted and thoroughly beaten out with the pursuit of last night, were preparing for an imperative rest. Just as soon as they are able, which will be in an hour from now, your orders shall be executed."

There was still a cloud on Magruder's brow.

"And that may give the prisoner time to escape," he said.

"I am very sorry," declared Will, "but physical endurance has its limit."

"Very true," agreed the general, with a sudden change of manner. "Our whole army has been under a great strain

for a long time now, but we hope to corner the foe and end this campaign and the war."

"I hope we may, sir."

"But what is this? Whom have you here?"

The general looked at Cy Frame and his granddaughter in a critical way. Will turned and said:

"General Magruder, this old man and his granddaughter have lived peacefully in a small cabin in the hills yonder until this morning. They have been driven from their home by Myrick's guerrillas, and now they come here with a most surprising story."

With this Will detailed the story as given him by Frame. General Magruder listened with close interest.

He was fully as astonished as Will had been, and finally said:

"This is a most astonishing revelation, and, if it is true, it is very important also."

"There is no reason to doubt Mr. Frame, sir," said Will.

"I can answer for his complete honesty."

"Oh, no doubt; but mistakes are sometimes made."

"Thar's no mistake, general, I promise ye," said Frame, earnestly. "If ye'll send a company with me to reconnoiter I'll soon prove that."

"I'll do that," agreed Magruder, and he turned to an orderly.

"Clewath, send Anderson of the First Georgia to me."

The orderly saluted.

"Anderson is out on the skirmish line," he said. "Shall I order him in?"

"No, no!" said Magruder, quickly. "I forgot. Let him stay there. There is Preston—he is needed where he is"—he pressed a hand across his brow.

"See here, Prentiss," he said, finally, "there is nobody can execute this move so well as you. Suppose you take your company when ready and go down to the White Oak swamp to look for Steele. If you find him, all right, but if you don't find him before noon, return. I will then send you and your company of Grays up to reconnoiter the hills. My reason for this is that you are peculiarly suited for such a task."

Will bowed, and replied:

"I am under your orders, General Magruder. It shall be as you say. Within the hour my men shall be at White Oak swamp."

"Very good! The matter of this ambush in the hills can wait a little while. But recapture Steele!"

"I will do my best."

"Very good! Report to me later."

General Magruder turned away, and Will Prentiss and his companions went back to the camp of the Grays.

Will now undertook to provide for them.

"It is likely that the army will not move on before our return," said Will, "so I will leave you to occupy my tent until I return. I trust you will make yourselves comfortable."

"We thank you, Captain Prentiss," said Enid, warmly.

"Your kindness is very great."

"God bless ye, my boy," said the old mountaineer. "We'll pray for yer success."

It was not long before the drum-beat called the Grays from their blankets. At once they answered, and quickly fell into line.

A handsome appearance they made as with Will Prentiss, the young captain, at their head they marched away down the highway toward the White Oak swamp.

Soon they were beyond the lines and moving along parallel with the Charles City road. They crossed fields, and made their way through rail fences, and finally reached the bottom-lands.

Here they left the main highway and took a branch road through the swamp. It was of corduroy, and it became necessary to use care in traversing it, for its surface was rough. Along this the Grays now hurried.

As they went on, Will deployed his line, with the intention presently of making a sweeping course through the swamp. But suddenly a bullet went singing over his head. Another and another followed.

"The foe are in force on our flank," cried Fred Randolph, as he came up.

CHAPTER III.

THE GRAYS WIN SUCCESS.

It was a startling announcement. But Will Prentiss was ready.

Quick as a flash, and with a master hand, he deployed his men and faced his line about to meet the foe. The position was not of the most desirable.

He had not expected to find the enemy in the swamp. It was believed that they were further north.

That this could only be a small detachment Will felt sure. So he felt no great alarm.

But the bullets were whistling rapidly now. The Grays began to answer the fire.

It was not an easy matter to conduct a battle in such a dense growth of trees and underbrush. It was almost impossible to see an enemy.

But the contest was hotly waged. Men began to fall, and Will saw that something must be done.

He tried hard to locate the enemy. They seemed to be screened by a dense clump of hickory. Will finally, as he believed, located them. Then he decided upon the correct plan, according to military tactics.

This was to charge.

He knew that to remain where he was meant the conduct of the fight indefinitely. He believed in change of position and quick action.

So, with sudden impulse, he sprang up and gave the thrilling order:

"Ready, Grays! Fix bayonets! Charge!"

In an instant they responded with a rousing cheer. Forward went the little company with a rush.

Through the tangled growth, over fallen trees and debris

went the Grays. Bullets whistled among them, and now, for the first time, they caught a glimpse of blue uniforms.

There was a line of them among the trees, but they fell back before the mad charge. On rushed the Grays.

Finding no resistance, they kept on. Will soon discovered that the foe had been scattered like chaff.

It was a hollow victory for the Grays. Quickly they reformed and made the welkin ring with their cries of triumph.

"Hurrah! Hurrah for the Confederacy!"

But though this was an apparent victory, Will Prentiss was not deceived. He knew that it would be fatal to linger in the vicinity.

Reinforcements would be certain to come to the assistance of the foe. It was his best move to keep going.

So he swung the Grays about and marched rapidly away at a tangent. In the depth of the swamp it was quite impossible to get exact bearings. But Will had only his one purpose in view, and this was to intercept Steele.

This, though, it seemed too late to accomplish. There seemed no reason to doubt that the escaped prisoner was already in the Union lines. Yet the young Confederate captain was resolved to push on through the swamp.

Scouts were out in all directions. These brought in all manner of reports.

But none brought word of Steele. It seemed certain that he had escaped beyond reach, and that the present attempt to recapture him was but a waste of time.

With this conviction Will thought of turning back a number of times. But he was extremely averse to abandoning an enterprise once assumed. So he still kept on.

Finally, after an hour of floundering in the swamp, one of the scouts came in, bearing a knapsack. The scout's name was Warden.

"Captain Prentiss," he said, saluting, "I have an important report to make. I believe I came across our man. At the fordway of a little creek I saw a man carrying this knapsack. I hailed him and he started to run. I fired and the bullet must have cut the strap, for his knapsack fell to the ground. I chased him for a mile, until the woods became full of Union soldiers. Then, fearing capture, I turned back. I recovered the knapsack. It seems full of papers."

Will opened the knapsack and pulled out the papers. He gave a great cry of joy.

"Warden," he cried, "you have done it! These are the stolen papers. Here are plans of the Richmond defenses, and also General Longstreet's private correspondence. Hurrah, this is everything! You didn't get the man, but you got the next best thing."

"Do you mean it, Captain Prentiss?" cried the scout, with delight.

"Yes," replied Will. "In which direction did the bearer of this knapsack go?"

"East, I think."

"Oh! You say you ran into a line of Union troops in the swamp?"

"Yes."

"He is then within the lines. It is out of the question for us to capture him now. We have done all we could. We will now return and report to General Magruder."

This was plainly the only course left for the little company of Grays. Already it had become evident that the Union soldiers were advancing with a heavier force to renew the battle. Will saw the danger of becoming enveloped in the swamp.

He had no idea of being cornered in this fashion. Already bullets were again singing through the branches of the trees.

So the Grays began to fall back in good order.

A hot fight was kept up all the way, until they finally came out of the swamp. The Union foe, however, were pressing eagerly in pursuit, and in the open fields the Grays might have been placed in a dangerous position in face of such overwhelming numbers.

But just then, along a branch of the Charles City road, Will saw a train of Confederate artillery. Instantly an idea seized him.

"Signal that artillery, Fred," he cried. "Have them throw a few shells into the swamp to cover our retreat."

Fred dashed away to execute the order. The colonel of the artillery at once agreed to the request.

The horses were detached, the guns unlimbered, and the gunners took their positions. There were six fine brass field pieces.

Just as the blue line began to surge from the swamp the guns belched forth flame and smoke. The ground trembled with the volley, and grape and canister were hurled into the swamp.

When the smoke cleared away, nothing was to be seen of the foe. They were in full retreat through the swamp.

It required but a few discharges from the field pieces to assure the complete safety of the Grays. They had now reached the highway, and fell into marching column. The artillery came on behind.

In this manner they reached Magruder's lines. They passed in, and the Grays marched to their place in the line of encampment.

Will went at once to report to General Magruder. That officer turned in surprise.

"Why, Prentiss," he cried, "you back so soon? Did you get your man?"

"No, general," replied Will, with a salute. A shade of keen disappointment crossed Magruder's face.

"Why are you back, then?" he asked.

"It is quite impossible to catch Steele now. He slipped us and is already in the Union lines."

"Well," said Magruder, testily, "you can now start on that scouting trip to the hills."

"One moment, general," said Will, as he laid the knapsack on the camp table. "We did not get the thief, but we got his booty."

"What's that?" exclaimed General Magruder, as his face lit up. "You have recovered the papers?"

"Yes," and with this Will told the story of Warden's

chase of the villain, and of their experiences in the swamp. Magruder listened with interest.

"Prentiss, you have done well," he cried. "Here are certainly all the papers stolen from General Longstreet's trunk. Indeed, this is very fortunate. The thief has escaped, but the recovery of the papers is the main thing. He cannot have examined them all, nor could he remember their contents all through. You have done well."

"I think you should give all credit to Warden, the scout."

"I shall remember it, and when he comes in I shall see that he has proper credit. I shall notify Longstreet at once that his papers are safe."

"Have you any further orders, sir?" asked Will.

"None, except that you will at once proceed into the hills and investigate the story told by this old man. Do you consider him reliable?"

"I do, sir."

"Very good! If you can substantiate his story we will at once take measures to attack the Union forces secreted in those hills. We will give them no opportunity to strike us in the back."

Will saluted and withdrew. With all haste he returned to the bivouac of the Grays.

Cy Frame was waiting, and the old mountaineer was eager and trembling with excitement. Will at once gave the order to Fred.

"Let the men fall in," he said. "We are going to look up this little game of Myrick's."

"Ye'll find it well wuth it," cried Frame, eagerly. "But I think ye oughter hev more men to go up thar with."

"Oh, I guess we can hold them with our present number," said Will. "We won't pretend to give them a pitched battle."

Rapidly the Grays fell into line now. Soon they were under way, and marching once more out of the camp.

But this time it was in a different direction. They started for the little range of hills, which were really just beyond the present line of both armies.

They were, therefore, as accessible to one as to the other. In fact, they would have been seized and intrenched long since by Magruder, but he knew that the Union divisions would not remain in the vicinity long enough to make it worth while.

They crossed the turnpike and turned up a series of lanes. Then they traversed the fields and passed through a section of woods.

They were now beyond the lines of both armies. It was ground not yet disputed, but which might, at any time, witness hard fighting.

Cy Frame and Enid marched with the little company. They had now ascended the rough hill road until they had reached the shattered cabin home of the mountaineer.

Here the old man paused, and pointed to a path, which led up the hillside.

"Thet's ther path, captain. It will take ye up into ther hidin' place of ther Yankees. Ye kin see what they hev done to my home. I'm on'y a poor old man, an' I hain't

got long fer this world, but I'd give a year of my life ter see Myrick an' his gang hanged."

"You may be given the chance," said Will. "Don't lose courage, Uncle Cy. I fear the march has been too much for you."

The old man had paused, and begun to grope blindly in the air. His eyes were glassy, and froth appeared on his lips.

"Look out, boys! Support him!" cried Fred Randolph. "He is faint."

Several of the Grays started forward and caught the old man just as he was about to fall. They at once proceeded to apply restoratives.

But poor old Cy rolled his eyes, and said, feebly:

"I kain't go no further, captain! Ye'll have to find yer way. I'm—all done."

Enid had been for some moments distraught with grief. She threw her arms about her aged guardian, and cried:

"Oh, don't give up, grandfather! If anything happens to you, I am left all alone, homeless and friendless, in this big world. Oh, it must not be!"

CHAPTER IV.

THE GIRL SPY.

It was a pitiful scene, and Will Prentiss, as well as the others, were deeply affected. But he said:

"Have courage, Enid! He is only exhausted. Your grandfather may be spared to you many years yet."

"With God's grace I shall, child," said Cy Frame. "Have good courage, little one. I can't go further with 'em to show 'em the hidin' place of the Yankees, but you know whar it is, little one. You kin show them, and I beg ye to do so."

Enid started up, with flushed face. There was inspiration in her eyes.

"And leave you, grandfather?" she cried. "Oh, I cannot do that!"

"Nonsense, child! I shall be safe here. I only need rest. I beg ye to go."

Will and Fred had already started up the hillside path. It was certain that delay was dangerous for their purpose and their presence in the hills might be discovered at any moment.

It was plain that Cy Frame could go no further. At this juncture, Enid, his pretty granddaughter, sprang up, and cried:

"Boys in Gray, I am a daughter of the Confederacy! I will lead you!"

So thrilling was her manner, and so heroic her words, that the boys gave a rousing cheer. She had sprung up the hillside like a gazelle.

Will Prentiss followed her, crying:

"Forward, Grays! We will drive the foe out of their hiding place!"

Old Cy Frame started up instinctively, and he made an effort to voice the cheer. But his exhausted energies forbade this, and he sank back.

Up the hillside path went Enid May. The Boys in Gray were close behind her. The young girl knew every nook of the hills.

Through intricate passes and over heights she led them, until suddenly they came to a halt in the verge of a little clump of cedars. She pointed to the face of a little depression, just below them, and which was encircled by the hills.

"There," she said, in a low tone, "you may see them. My grandfather told you the truth."

This could not be denied. The stacked arms of the Union regiments extended in long, glistening lines. The level space was thronged with soldiers in blue.

They were hiding here and waiting only for the Confederate army to pass, when they would file out and attack them in the rear.

To Will Prentiss this was all plain enough. But he was puzzled to know how he could prevent the blow.

He knew that it would be folly for him to attempt to give battle to such superior numbers. There seemed but one course left, and this was to return to General Magruder with a report of the true state of affairs.

Yet the boy captain of the Grays was loth to do this.

The impulse and the desire was upon him to strike a good, hard blow. But how could it be done safely.

For some time the little company of Confederates remained on the ridge, watching the Union camp.

It was a mystery to Will why Magruder's scouts had not long since discovered this nest of foes. But it was plain that they had never thought of viewing these hills with suspicion, so long as the Confederate army was sure to change its position.

Suddenly Fred clutched Will's arm.

"Look," he whispered, "do you see that?"

The boy captain glanced across the little valley to where it was entered by a small pass at the north. He gave a little start.

It was easy to see long lines of blue filing down to swell the number in the valley. Reinforcements were coming in rapidly. The number was being swelled so as to make the rear attack a sure thing.

"Jupiter!" gasped Will. "What can be done? General Magruder will soon be between two fires!"

"There is only one thing for us to do."

"What?"

"Send word to General Magruder at once. His line is going to move upon Sumner at Savage's Station this afternoon. If we have sufficient force here to hold this end of the valley, we can win the day."

Will saw the logic of this. He knew that the massing of these regiments for the contemplated rear attack must weaken Sumner's front.

If Magruder should send sufficient force to help the Grays hold the Union regiments in the valley a great vic-

tory could be gained. The day would be won for the Confederacy.

Will turned to his lieutenant.

"Fred," he said, "we hold the key to the whole situation. All depends upon us. It is for us to win the day——"

"Or lose it!"

"We must win it."

"To do so, Magruder must send us reinforcements."

"He will do so!"

"I hope so. We need a brigade. Send a courier—by the way, Fred, send Joe Spotswood post-haste down to the camp. Let him take my horse."

"It shall be done," cried the young lieutenant. He hastened away.

Meanwhile Will took all precautions against their presence in the hills being discovered. He deployed his men skillfully to hold the little pass until reinforcements should arrive.

All this while Enid May had remained an eager observer. She now advanced, and said:

"Captain Prentiss, if you will give me a musket I will be glad to aid in the defense."

Will gave a great start.

"You?" he exclaimed.

"Yes!" replied the young girl, in a fearless way. "I know well how to handle firearms. I have lived all my life in the mountains of the Blue Ridge, and it has not been for naught."

"But—your sex forbids such a thing," protested Will.

"The women of the South do not fear to take up arms for the rights of their country," she said, proudly.

"But—you can serve me better in another way, Enid. I——"

"That is true, brother. I will give her better work to do!"

Startled by the musical voice in their rear, both Will and Enid turned like a flash. What they saw gave them a great thrill.

Before them stood a young woman, dressed in a riding habit. She was very beautiful, though her face was firm in its lines and full of character.

Will Prentiss gave a great shout.

"Nell," he cried, "my sister!"

The next moment they were clasped in each other's arms. Enid stood back, shyly, and would have moved away.

But Nellie Prentiss, the beautiful and brave sister of the boy captain of the Grays, who had done the Confederacy great service as a female spy, suddenly cried:

"Wait, young woman! Do not go yet, I want to see you!"

Enid paused in a diffident way. It was plain that she did not feel easy. But Nellie Prentiss, with a winsome smile, walked forward and took her hands.

"Do not fear me, Enid," she said, "I am your friend. I have a bit of news for you as well."

The mountaineer's granddaughter flushed, and stammered an inaudible reply. Sweet Nell Prentiss, the belle of her set in Richmond, however, was not to be gainsaid. In a few moments her gentle overtures so reassured the

mountain maid that she relaxed her timidity and grew communicative.

Nell questioned her carefully about various matters, which were all an enigma to Will. Then she said:

"I have just come from General Longstreet's camp. I met there a brave youth, who, for a deed of daring, has been promoted a lieutenant in a Virginia company. His name—can you guess?"

Nell gazed merrily at the young girl, whose cheeks were scarlet, but whose eager eyes glowed with a great radiance of light. But she could not speak, and the mute appeal of her manner caused Nell to smile again and say:

"His name is Karl Merton, and he is a fine, noble type of Southern youth. I have had earnest conversation with him, for he, with his company, was my escort from Mechanicsville. He told me of a certain young woman, whose eyes were blue as the sky, and whose soul was pure and true. Do you know who she is?"

A glad cry broke from the mountain maid's lips. Then her manner became grave and dignified.

"We are friends," she said, quietly. "I am glad to learn of his good fortune and his promotion, which, I know, he well deserves."

"Yes," said Nell Prentiss, "he does deserve it well, and if he lives he will win yet greater promotion. He told me of you. He knew I was coming here, so he sent this token."

She placed a bit of folded note paper in the young girl's hands. Enid blushed, and shyly turned away. Nell, with a pleasant, reassuring laugh, now turned to Will.

"Well, brother mine," she cried, "I hear glowing reports of you and the Grays. You are winning fame. All Richmond is agog over you."

"Which is all very pleasant," said Will, modestly. "But tell me of yourself. Where do you come from?"

"From the Union lines," she replied. "From General Sumner's camp, with important news."

CHAPTER V.

THE ATTACK.

Will Prentiss looked admiringly at his sister. He loved and revered her more than any other of her sex he had ever known, save their own mother.

"Nellie, I admire your brave work," he said, "but, oh, I so fear that it may some day bring you to trouble."

"Pshaw! don't give way to such gloomy forebodings," she laughed. "I am quite capable of taking care of myself. These are modern times, you know, brother mine, and women are secure from harsh treatment."

"But if you were discovered to be a spy——"

"They have not discovered it yet. Of course, I wear a disguise when I am in the Union lines."

Will drew a deep breath.

"Well," he said, "I pray for you every night. Have you seen our father lately?"

"Yes. He is now with President Davis in Richmond. He is very well."

"I am glad to hear that. Oh, Nell, can you realize our position fully? Does it occur to you that our country is plunged into a terrible war; that our home is broken up, and we may all sacrifice our lives to the cause before peace comes again?"

"They could not be given in a nobler manner," replied the ardent young daughter of the South. "We should not hesitate on that score, Will."

"True, sister mine," said the young captain, gravely. "But do you reflect that this is the most cruel of wars, that we are rending our own flesh and spilling our own blood——"

"But the South——"

"The South and the North are but two parts of one country. The questions between them should be settled without recourse to the sword."

"I believe you, brother," said Nell, with a retrospective light in her eyes. "But the strife cannot be stayed by any protest of yours or mine. The war is on, and must be fought out."

"Yes," said the boy captain, sadly, "it must be fought out. Ties of friendship must be severed. Do you recall my school-days at old Fairdale, Nell? Do you not remember my dearest friend and chum, Jack Clark?"

Nell's face flushed. Her eyes sparkled, and she replied: "He is fighting against us!"

"Yes," replied Will, despondently, "Jack and I parted, he to take up his sword in the cause of the North, as captain of the Fairdale Blues, I to assume the captaincy of the Grays. We are enemies, yet deep down in my heart there is naught but respect and love for my old chum. And you—Nell?" Will looked earnestly at his sister.

"Jack's heart was centered upon you, and I knew it. You cared for him, yet—you are parted, perhaps forever!"

Nellie Prentiss grew white. She gasped a little and turned aside. In a moment her manner changed, and she turned to her brother.

"Will, I have learned important facts. Orders were sent Generals Sumner and Heintzelman to make a stand at Savage's Station. Our scouts intercepted the orderly. As a result Heintzelman, not receiving the order, has fallen back and left Sumner alone. It is hardly necessary to say that General Magruder is preparing to attack him, and hopes to cut his division off."

Will's veins thrilled. He saw the mighty possibilities of this in an instant.

Sumner, expecting the co-operation of Heintzelman, would not hesitate to make a stand at Savage's Station. In that event it would seem an easy matter for Magruder's superior force to swing about en echelon and cut him off.

The possibilities of this mighty coup impressed Will deeply. He saw that it was more than ever necessary to hold the valley against these regiments, held so cunningly in ambush.

Will now waited for the return of the messenger he had

sent to General Magruder. It seemed an age till he saw Spotswood galloping up the hill path.

He flung himself from his horse and put the message in Will's hands. The boy captain broke it open eagerly.

"My Dear Prentiss:—I realize fully the importance of holding the hill passes against the planned rear attack of those Union regiments in ambush. But I am about to attack Sumner in force, and I cannot well spare a single company. I cannot send the brigade you request. The best I can do is to send you six companies of Carolina troops under Colonel Bell. I have instructed him that you are the senior officer and in command. Hold the pass at all hazards until I can cut Sumner off, when I will send you all the reinforcements you may require. Wishing you good fortune,

Yours,

"MAGRUDER."

Will gasped in dismay. For a moment the ground seemed to reel beneath his feet. To him it seemed as if a great catastrophe was not to be averted.

Fred, who stood near, saw his perturbation, and, advancing, asked:

"What is the matter, Will?"

"The worst has happened!"

"What?"

"We shall be defeated! We can never hold our own! Read that!"

Fred read the dispatch. His face paled, and he said:

"Seven hundred against three thousand! We shall be wiped out!"

For a moment Will stood plunged in utter dejection. Nell Prentiss, who was nearby, had heard all.

"Don't give up, brother," she said, "you may be able to do it. Remember that you have the vantage of ground."

"But—the superiority of numbers must outweigh that," he said.

"I'm not so sure! Let us look the ground over," said the plucky young girl. "Don't you see that they have got to come up this little narrow valley? Your fire will be massed."

"Remember the pass at Thermopylae," said Fred. "We must intrench, Will. Let us begin at once."

Without a word the boy captain looked the ground over and decided upon the best plan of defense. He saw that it was impossible for the Union regiments to leave the hills to attack Magruder's rear save by this pass.

In an instant his plans were laid.

"We have no artillery," he said.

"Neither have they," said Fred.

The Grays instantly began to throw up lines of intrenchments. These were necessarily of a hasty form. They worked with what shovels they could find, with bayonets, and even with their hands. As a result before long a fairly good wall of intrenchments had begun to crown the ridge.

This was hidden by trees from the Union forces in the valley below.

It was exceedingly strange that no Union guards or

scouts had advanced to examine the outlet, which this pass afforded. The explanation doubtless lay in the fact that Myrick's men had cleared it a few hours before, and it was supposed to be clear.

Now, however, and just as the reinforcements sent by Magruder arrived, under the command of Colonel Bell, a line of scouts was seen to be advancing up the valley.

"Here they come!" shouted Fred. "We will soon be looking for hot work!"

Will Prentiss walked along the trenches, sword in hand.

"Steady, boys," he said, quietly. "Hold your ground! Wait for the word to fire! Keep cool!"

Behind the line of scouts came the advance guard of the regiments. The whole great force was seen to be getting under way.

Just then the booming of guns was heard to the north. It was easy to guess their meaning.

Magruder was attacking Sumner and trying to cut him off. Soon the firing grew heavy, indicating that a lively battle was in progress.

The critical moment had come.

The Union regiments in the valley would now certainly move out to attack Magruder's rear. The clever scheme of Myrick seemed to be sure of success.

But, crouching in their trenches at the head of the valley was a handful of brave Confederate boys, ready to give their lives to avert the rear attack.

On came the continuous line of scouts.

It was not possible to long avoid discovery. An advance picket of the Confederate defenders was seen by the scouts. He was at once fired upon.

He fell back and then the scouts did the same. In their place came a line of skirmishers.

These crept up until near enough to engage the Grays. Fire now opened in a scattering way.

It was plainly a surprise to the Union forces that an intrenched force lay in their path. They advanced with great caution until they had drawn the fire of the Confederates.

Will Prentiss saw that a desperate fight must ensue.

The skirmish line fell back, and there was a long interval. Then a murmur went along the trenches:

"They're coming!"

"Steady, boys! Give it to 'em!"

Up the ascent into the pass came a charging regiment. With bayonets glistening and in full lines they came on, making a brave spectacle.

As Will Prentiss saw that handsome line of blue coming to the attack so nobly, he felt a thrill of compassion. He knew well that they were fellow countrymen. It was hard to give the order that would mow them down like stubble in the field.

In a few moments, where that fine host with their glittering trappings were treading, there would be heaps of dead and dying men. The air would be horrid with the roar of musketry and the sickening cries of the dying and the wounded.

For a moment Will Prentiss had not the power to give the order. Had it been possible he would have gladly

thrown down his sword and gone to meet those oncoming soldiers with words of peace.

But he knew it could not be. A foolish moment of hesitation and all would be lost. They were the foe and they sought his life. If he did not repulse them, they would overrun his intrenchments and bayonet his men.

So the spirit of the soldier returned to him, though it did not obliterate the ever present sense of mercy. He stepped forward and gave the ringing order:

"Attention! Take aim! Fire!"

A sweeping volley leaped from the muzzles of the front line of defenders in the trenches.

Will saw the blue line thin, and gaps occurred here and there. Forms lay on the ground. But the gaps filled up and the foe came on.

CHAPTER VI.

A HARD FIGHT.

Very cleverly Will had arranged the method of delivering the volleys. As soon as the front line delivered a volley it fell back, and another line came forward instantly.

There were three of these lines extending around the three sides of the slope. While one line was firing, the one in the rear was reloading.

In this way a continuous fire was kept up, and it was so sweeping and murderous that only hardened veterans could stand up before it.

In the rear Will had stationed a reserve of one hundred men. These were to be held ready to hurl into a breach, if the enemy should happen to at any point gain the trenches.

With their muskets loaded and their bayonets fixed they waited like savage hounds in the leash.

Still up the slope came the brave Union regiment, and it looked as if they would gain the trenches in spite of the awful sheet of fire.

"Why don't they break?" gasped Fred, in dismay. "They are like a stone wall. How can they face it? They'll surely be in upon us, Will!"

"Keep cool," said the boy captain, "they are wavering now."

This was true. Certainly the Union soldiers did not lack pluck. They came up almost to the trenches, when Will gave the word for a universal volley.

This was for all three lines, or all that had reloaded, to fire at once. If this terrific concentrated fire did not hurl them back the battle must be hand-to-hand, and this would probably be against the Grays.

From the muzzles of the muskets leaped one terrific death-dealing volley. The Union regiments seemed to fly to pieces, as if they were an object of brittle glass.

Down the slope the survivors ran in wild confusion. The ground was heaped with the dead.

But right behind them was the second regiment coming

to their support. The third was trying to scale the hills for an enfilading fire.

But Will had provided for this in a skillful manner. Trenches had been run obliquely at each end of the line. These were manned by plenty of sharpshooters, with long range guns.

These marksmen rapidly picked off all who tried to gain the high ground on right or left. In fact they kept up so deadly a fire that the attempt was abandoned.

The repulse of the first Union attack was as great a surprise to the Union forces as it was a matter of joy to the Virginia Grays.

The Grays cheered with wild triumph. It was certainly plucky work for a small band of seven hundred to thus hold full three thousand at bay.

Advantage of position was largely accountable for this. The Grays offered but a poor target for the foe.

But the Union colonels were furious, and quickly marshaled their men for a second attack.

It was highly necessary for them to carry the trenches, for they would be late in falling upon Magruder.

Will Prentiss was everywhere, up and down the line.

"Now, boys, keep steady!" he shouted. "We'll whip them out of their boots! Hold your ground! Don't let them get the start! Keep steady!"

The Grays dug their heels into the ground and glanced over the sights of their guns. They could see the great mass of blue uniforms below as they formed for the charge.

Once again they must hurl the foe back. This time it did not seem as if it would be possible.

It was certain that they would advance in greater force. In the previous attempt they had nearly succeeded. They would certainly succeed now, if ever.

It was a critical time. Hard, indeed, it would have been to categorize the sensations of those men in the rifle pits, who, with powder-blackened, grim faces and desperate eyes, waited for the coming of the foe.

They knew that a failure to hurl the foe back once more would mean death or ignominious surrender.

"Steady, boys! You did it before! You can do it again!"

Will Prentiss, cool and calm, walked along the trenches. A bullet clipped a button from his coat, another singed the hair on his brow. But he seemed to bear a charmed life.

Far away to the north he could hear the roar of artillery and the rattle of musketry.

He knew that Magruder was fighting desperately to cut off Sumner. It would mean disaster to let these regiments escape from this trap in the hills.

They must be held.

Now the Union line began again to ascend the slope. Up they came, in unwavering confidence.

"Oh, for a few pieces of artillery!" said Colonel Bell, who approached Will. "A few charges of grape would send them back!"

"We must fight it out as we are," said Will, grimly. "How is our ammunition?"

"We have a fair allowance. If they keep up the attack though we are apt to run short."

"Your men, then, brought only what their cartridge boxes could hold?"

"That is all."

Will's face did not change. But he said, in a matter-of-fact way:

"There is the necessity, then, of counter-charges. We must use cold steel, as well as ball and powder."

"I thought of that," said Bell. "If we had charged them on the last repulse I believe we could have got a hundred prisoners."

"We will try it this time."

But now it was seen that the critical moment had arrived. The Union line was within one hundred yards of the trenches.

Still Will did not give the order. Fifty yards were covered before he sprung up and cried:

"At them, Grays! Fire!"

A blazing volley leaped from the muzzles of the muskets. It was answered by a Union volley, which swept the breastworks like hail. Again the Grays sent in a volley.

Men dropped in heaps, but still the Union line came on. They were cheering madly, and if spirit and courage could succeed they were sure to win.

With ghastly dismay Will Prentiss saw that the Grays were unable to stop them with their volleys. So he gave the order for the concentrated volley. It was given, and staggered the Union line.

Another like it, instantly given, would certainly have broken them. But there was none to give, without time for reloading.

Will Prentiss adopted what he saw was their only hope. He shouted:

"Fix bayonets!"

In an instant the rattle of the steel blades filled the air. Then, over the breastworks like tigers, rushed that little line of seven hundred Confederates, for Will now called in his reserve.

Over the trenches they went with a ringing cheer, and hurled themselves upon the shattered and staggering column. The charge was well timed.

The Grays and their allies struck the Union line with such force that they were fairly hurled back, as with giant hands.

Before they could recover they were facing the terrible bayonets. Nothing human could stand before such a fierce onslaught.

Once again they broke. The brave Confederate defenders swept back a force fully three times their number and sent them in wild disorder back into the valley.

Will Prentiss was by far too clever to allow a pursuit. He knew too well the danger of this, for a full regiment was in reserve below.

So he called the Grays back into the trenches, where they retired with exultant cheers. Colonel Bell was beside himself with delight.

"That is what you call clever work," he cried. "It is

fighting. We did give them a beating, didn't we? I wonder if they are satisfied now."

There was great confusion among the Union regiments.

Their officers could be seen riding about furiously and whipping the demoralized men into line. It was a long time before they were again in a state of order.

On the slope lay scores of dead and wounded. The loss of men by the Grays and their allies was slight. Things looked bright indeed for them.

And still, from afar, came the din of the battle at Savage's Station.

"I wonder if Magruder has cut Sumner off yet?" cried Bell. "It sounds like hot work up there!"

"I hope that he has," said Will. "If fortune has been as kind to him as to us, he can feel good about it."

"You are right, captain! But our troubles are not yet over. It seems that they are going to renew the attack."

This was seen to be true. The Union regiments were certainly forming for a renewal of the attack.

Twice they had been repulsed. It was seen now that they were going to put their whole available force into the effort to carry the trenches.

Will knew that their repulse had weakened their courage. But he knew, as well, that the odds were still against him, and it was not impossible for the tide to turn.

So it was not without some anxiety that he watched the preparations going on below.

"Oh, if we only had a few pieces of artillery!" said Colonel Bell.

"It would be greatly to our advantage," said Will. "Still, we have little cause for discouragement. We are yet in the lead, and are winning the day."

"If we can only hold out."

"We must hold out."

Will now walked along the trenches and spoke encouraging words to the men. They responded with good cheer. Not a man but was ready.

The young captain of the Grays decided to maintain his tactics of the previous repulse. He would fire a concentrated volley and then give the foe the bayonet.

It required some time for the foe to form and advance this time. They had been pretty well discouraged.

But presently it was seen that they were again moving up the ascent. Will drew a deep breath and turned to behold a startling sight.

Behind a tree were two female figures. Each had a musket and were drawing aim at the foe. They were Nell Prentiss and Enid May.

The young captain was struck with amazement, and for a moment he was half vexed.

"Nell Prentiss," he cried, "what is this?"

The girl spy smiled, and made reply:

"You will need all the recruits you can gain, brother!" she said. "If you repulse them this time the day is won!"

"But I can't consent to this. You are exposing your lives—both of you!"

Enid stepped back, as if awed by his authority. But Nell said, resolutely:

"Now, Will, we are well protected here. We do not intend to expose ourselves. We are going to give them a shot and retire. We have no idea of going into the fight."

"But you are in great danger here. Ah! See that?"

A musket ball clipped a strip of bark from the tree trunk. Nell gave a little start.

"My, that was close!" she said.

"Yes!" said Will, sternly. "You must not expose yourself here. There are other and better ways in which to do service. The wounded back there need attention."

"We have given them attention, Will," pleaded Nell. "We will only give the foe one shot, and then we will fall back."

"Very well," said the boy captain, reluctantly. "You know, Nell, it is not well for you to take such chances. And as for Enid, if Karl Merton was here, he would unite with me in that sentiment."

The little mountain maid blushed in a vivid way and stepped back, but Nell kept her position.

Will was now obliged to go back to the trenches. The Union troops were mounting the ascent.

The Grays were crouching in their trenches. This was to be the supreme effort, the final charge. All depended upon its result.

Up and still nearer came the charging line. Suddenly, in front of them, sprang a tall, handsome officer.

"Forward, boys! For the Union and for liberty."

With a wild cheer the blue line rushed forward at double-quick. It seemed as if nothing could stay them. Straight for the trenches they came, with a solid wall of glittering bayonets.

But opposed to them over the earthen wall of the trenches was a line of death-dealing muzzles. Those in the front lines were looking into the face of death.

"Steady, Grays! Steady, all!" called the magnetic voice of Will Prentiss. "Now! Give it to them! Fire!"

A line of fire leaped from the trenches. The shower of musket balls tore into the ranks of the foe.

Men fell, and others pressed on over their bodies. A second volley swept away the first oncoming line.

Still the Union regiments did not falter. They were now within fifty feet of their mark.

It did not seem as if anything could stop them. They were pushed on by others in their rear. It was an irresistible, rabid human tide, which must overwhelm the handful of defenders.

A chill seized Will Prentiss. It seemed to him that the day was lost. It could not be possible for his small force to push back that mighty, living wall of steel.

A moment more and they would be over the breastworks.

CHAPTER VII.

REINFORCEMENTS.

Will Prentiss took a step toward the two plucky young girls. His manner was authoritative in the extreme.

They would be bayoneting his brave boys, and defeat would be quickly spelled.

Fred Randolph and Colonel Bell were everywhere, exhorting and rallying the boys. But this was hardly necessary.

None of them seemed to have the slightest idea of giving way. They held their positions firmly.

Once again the order was given for a concentrated volley. With a mighty crash it smote upon the air. The effect was frightful. The whole front line of blue seemed to fall. But it did not check them. Another line took its place, pushed on by those behind. It was certain that the Union colonels meant to have the trenches this time, at any cost.

There was but one recourse left. It must be steel against steel.

And this, Will saw with sinking heart, could only mean annihilation for the Grays. For the foe were overwhelming in numbers.

But the order was given. Like tigers the Grays sprung up and locked bayonets with their foes.

In that supreme moment, and even as the exultant, triumphant Union cheer was ringing, an unexpected thing happened.

Over the ridge, on the Union right flank, surged uniforms in gray. A young officer was seen to wave his sword, and shout:

"Give it to 'em, boys! Wipe 'em out! Get into 'em!"

With a piercing yell—the famous Confederate war cry, made so familiar to Union ears before the war was over, the reinforcements came charging down.

A volley shattered the flank of the Union regiments. For an instant it diverted the attention of the men in line; a feeling of panic seemed to assail them.

An instant before victory had been in their grasp. But this sudden and unexpected attack upon their flank was demoralizing and fatal.

Their line hesitated and swayed, and in a moment more began to grow ragged and break in confusion. Wild joy seized upon Will Prentiss, as he saw that victory was to be snatched from defeat.

At the moment he did not know who the new reinforcements were, whether they had been sent by Magruder, or whether, indeed, they might be the advance guard of his division. But they had come in the nick of time.

Back went the Union soldiers, dismayed and disorganized. Back, in wild confusion for over half a mile, into the valley they ran.

They formed in scattered detachments. Will regretted in that moment that he had not sufficient force to pursue them, for it was his belief that he could have forced all to surrender.

Indeed, this thought was upon him, when he turned to see who had so opportunely reinforced him.

A company of gray-uniformed soldiers were now coming into the trenches. This was all.

When they had first come over the ridge they had made a bold appearance, and it seemed as if their number was great. But now it would seem that they were only a hundred, all told. Their captain was a handsome youth of the

Southern type, and he came up and saluted Will in good style.

"Ah, captain!" he cried, "we seem to have arrived at the right moment! You were outnumbered!"

"Yes," replied Will, "we are indebted to you greatly. I thought General Magruder himself was coming to our aid."

"Do you belong to Magruder's division?"

"Yes."

"We are members of a regiment belonging to Longstreet's army. I am captain to-day, our captain having been killed yesterday by a shell. My name is Merton!"

Will gave a great start. He grasped the other's hand.

"What!" he exclaimed. "Are you Karl Merton, late lieutenant of the Fifth Carolina?"

"I am," replied the young captain. "At present scouting for General Longstreet. We heard your guns, and came over to see what was going on."

"This is pleasant news," cried Will. "I have a very pleasant surprise for you."

The young captain's face flushed.

"I think I understand you," he said. "I saw Mr. Frame down at his cabin. He told me—the whole story."

"She is here, I think. Before the last attack of the foe she was in company with my sister, Nell, over yonder."

Karl Merton gripped Will's hand, and looked him frankly in the eye.

"You understand," he said. "Enid is a brave girl. We are friends."

"I congratulate you," said Will. "I wish you much joy. Ah, there they are now!"

With a few quick strides the two young officers had passed between two heaps of boulders into an open space, where Nell and Enid had retired, to be safe from the flying bullets.

The girls turned, and Enid grew white and red by turns. Young Captain Merton with a bound was by her side, and she was in his arms.

Will and Nell looked comprehensively at each other and walked away.

"She is a beautiful girl, Will," said Nell, earnestly.

"He seems to be a fine fellow!"

"Yes."

"I wish them much joy!"

"So do I."

Nell sat down on a rock. Her face was bright with joy.

"You have repulsed them again, Will?"

"Yes. I hardly think they will return to another attack. If they do, I fear we shall have to retreat."

"Retreat! Why?"

"We are getting short of ammunition. We could hardly hope to hold them the next time."

"Well," said Nell, hopefully, "they will probably not come back, and I hope they won't. What a victory it will be for you, Will."

"I would give much to know how it goes with Magruder."

"The guns are thundering at the north there. There is a hot fight going on at Savage's Station."

"I wish we were in it."

"Dear me! Haven't you had enough to keep you busy here?"

"Yes, but I like to be in the main encounter. This is only a side issue."

"But a most important one. See how you have spoiled their game of flanking or rear attack. When General Lee hears of it he will embrace you."

"The credit should not be all mine," said Will. "Colonel Bell and his brave men have done their share. Then this happy arrival of Merton and his company has saved the day."

Brother and sister walked out to a point, where they had a good view of the valley.

Nell opened her notebook, and began to write notes of the battle. Will, with his glass, studied the distant regiments in blue.

Suddenly he exclaimed:

"We have won, Nell! The day is ours! They are in full retreat!"

"In full retreat?" cried the girl. "That is true. They are going back to join Sumner's main division. Their little game failed. You have successfully held the ground against them."

"And perhaps saved Magruder."

"Yes," said Nell, with a ring of joy in her voice. "This is a glorious day for the Confederacy."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE BATTLE AT THE RAILROAD.

It was true that the Union regiments were in full retreat. They were hastily marching out of the valley to rejoin Sumner.

Their plan of flank attack had been abandoned perforce. Certainly it was a victory for the Grays.

There was much rejoicing when this was known. Some suggested a pursuit.

But Will shook his head.

"No," he said, "that will not do. We have done our part in holding them back. It is now too late for them to carry out their purpose. They are beaten. Our proper move now is to, as quickly as possible, rejoin Magruder and reinforce him to our small extent."

"You are right," agreed Colonel Bell. "And I am sure he sadly needs every man he can get."

"Good!" cried Fred Randolph, approvingly. "I believe, though, we ought to leave a small force here to guard the pass."

"You may leave me and my company," said Karl Merton. "I will remain here until to-morrow. Then I will return to my regiment."

"Very good," agreed Will. "That is a capital plan. If the men are all in good shape, we will start at once."

"The dead and wounded——"

"The dead shall be buried by my men," said Karl. "The wounded—you will hardly care to take with you."

"No! I will be compelled to leave them with a detail to nurse and care for them."

So the arrangements were quickly made. The Grays were eager to return to the main army, as were Colonel Bell's men.

So in a short while they marched out of the trenches, ready for the march to the scene of battle at Savage's Station.

Nell Prentiss embraced Enid in farewell and, with Will, wished her much joy. They bade Captain Merton adieu, and the start was made.

Nell was given Fred Randolph's horse, he chivalrously giving it up and marching with the men. She rode in advance with Will.

"Well, brother," she said, gaily, "that was a fine little romance we encountered at Mr. Frame's place. I do hope the poor old man will recover his home."

"Be sure that Karl Merton will see to that," said Will. "I am very favorably impressed with that young officer, Nell."

"So am I," said Nell, and she sighed. Will spurred his horse nearer.

"You atrocious flirt!" he exclaimed. "I believe you would try to cut Enid out, if it was not for your promise to—to——"

"Well, whom?" She looked at him with pretty defiance.

"Shall I speak his name?" said Will, in a low tone. Then his face changed, as did Nell's. "I forgot," he said.

"Yes, you forgot," said the young Southern girl, with a far-away light in her eyes. "The war has put that all aside, my brother."

Will knew that she was thinking of Jack Clark, the handsome young captain of the Fairdale Blues. But there was the impassable gulf between them. It did not seem that it could ever be bridged.

As they rode on they now heard the thunder of Magruder's guns more plainly. A terrific engagement was in progress at Savage's Station.

For what seemed an interminable period they pressed on. Will had begun to despair of reaching the battle scene, when Colonel Bell rode up, and cried:

"Yonder is the railroad, Captain Prentiss. It is a direct route to Savage's Station. Why not take it?"

"Very well," agreed Will. The line of march was at once changed.

But as the Grays drew near the railroad, they heard a distant whistle, and a train swung into sight. The locomotive was hitched to four flat cars. On these were field pieces and a squad of artillerymen.

But they wore uniforms of gray, and a great cheer went up.

"They have been sent up from Richmond to reinforce Magruder," cried Bell. "That is plain enough."

The train had rounded a distant curve at full speed. But now the whistle began to peal forth shrieks of alarm, and the speed was slackened. It was plain that something was wrong.

"What's up?" cried Fred Randolph. "Do they take us for foes?"

"No!" cried Bell, spurring his horse forward. "Look yonder!"

Plain to the view of all could be seen a swarm of men in blue coming over the railroad embankment. They were seen to lift the rails and ties and thus force the train to come to a stop.

This it did. The engineer jammed the throttle home, and the train began to stop. There was much excitement among the artillerymen.

With cheers of triumph, the Union force started down the track to capture the train. It could be seen that a force behind the train had also torn up the track.

This was enough for Will Prentiss. He spurred his horse forward.

"Come on, boys!" he cried. "Here is work for us to do! Clean the rascals out!"

With a wild cheer the Confederate boys rushed forward. Bell's men were on the left.

The Union attacking force turned in surprise at this unexpected attack upon them. They saw the Grays coming at the double-quick.

It was evidently a totally unexpected development. As the Grays drew nearer the railroad, Fred Randolph gave a great cry.

"On my word," he shouted, "it is Steve Myrick's men!"

This was true. The party was not a regular Union regiment, but a band of guerrillas. To be sure, they wore army overcoats, which had given them the appearance of Union troops.

Now, as a rule, the guerrillas were never anxious to fight on even ground with the regular soldiers. They excelled in bush fighting.

But, so disgruntled was Myrick, evidently by the unexpected interference in his plans, that he massed his men behind the railroad embankment.

As the Grays dashed on they were met with a raking volley. At once Will gave orders for them to deploy. They quickly did so, and answered the fire.

In a very short space of time a lively battle was in progress.

Myrick's force was fully equal in numbers to that of the Grays. He had the advantage of the railroad embankment as well.

So, for a time, he held the Grays. But at length Bell's men crept up through some scrub and reached a point on the embankment below.

From this point they could pour a hot enflaming fire into the guerrillas' lines. It was easy to see that they would not stand this for long.

So, after a few moments, they broke and fell back. The Grays, with a ringing cheer, charged over the railroad. But the guerrillas had reached their horses and were gone.

A few moments later Will was shaking hands with the artillery officers. They were delighted with their escape.

"We're on our way to Savage's Station," said their colonel, whose name was Foster. "We are to reinforce Magruder. How goes the battle?"

"We do not know. We have been engaged in repelling a flank attack."

"And you succeeded?"

"Yes."

"Good! Can't we relay these rails and go on?"

"You will waste valuable time," said Will. "As you can see by the bursting shells that the line is not a mile from here, I think you had better join us in our march thither."

"I agree with you," said Colonel Foster. "I will unload my guns at once, though I have no horses."

"If you have not men enough to drag them I can furnish you any number."

"Thank you. I will avail myself of your kind offer."

So a long file of soldiers to each gun was furnished, and soon the artillery company was en route to the field, in company with the Grays.

Many who were there that day can tell of Magruder's desperate attempt to overwhelm Sumner.

The Union general was hard pressed, but he still seemed to tenaciously hold his ground.

In spite of the terrific charges of the brave troops under Magruder he seemed to hold his position. When the Grays and the Richmond artillery arrived, Magruder himself rode down to welcome them.

"We need you!" he cried. "These Yankees are holding on like the deuce. We must break their line. One hard drive and I believe we can turn them."

The artillery was hauled up to a commanding position, and it opened fire. In the excitement General Magruder had not recognized the Grays nor their young captain.

But now, as Will saluted, he gave a violent start, and gasped:

"Prentiss! For the love of heaven, is that you? What are you doing here?"

"I have come back to report, sir," replied Will.

"To report? But—what of that rear attack? I have since learned that Sumner has counted upon it to cut me to pieces!"

Will's veins tingled, as he replied:

"The rear attack has been frustrated, sir. We held the pass and won the day!"

"You beat them?"

"Yes."

"What, with your small force?" exclaimed General Magruder, in sheer amazement. "They were three thousand strong!"

"Three to one, sir, and we held them," said Will. For a moment General Magruder was silent. Then he leaned over in his saddle, and said:

"Prentiss, you have won this day for us. We have the Yankees whipped, but if you had failed to stop that rear attack we would have been beaten."

"You give me too much credit, General Magruder," protested the boy captain.

"Not a bit of it!" cried the great general. "You deserve it and even more. You have done a wonderful thing."

It was plain that the general meant what he said. He galloped away, and Will was left for a moment in a confused state of mind.

He was brought out of this by Fred Randolph, who came hastily up.

"Captain," he said, with a salute, "they're having it hot and heavy over yonder on Sumner's right. Suppose we go out there and take a part in it?"

"It shall be done!" cried Will.

At once the Grays were ordered forward, and with a cheer they responded. A short while later they were on the firing line.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW ORDERS.

Certainly the Virginia Grays had covered themselves with glory. Now they were again in the thickest of it.

The position they held was at the angle of a rail fence. Three times this fence had been captured and lost by a Union company of soldiers.

The Confederate defenders had been cut to pieces, and now the Grays slipped into their place.

No sooner had they done so, when from the woods came the charging Union line. They were determined to recapture the angle in the fence.

"Let them come on, boys! Keep steady!" said Will, in a firm voice. "Wait until they are in good range. Now, ready!"

The Union line was within one hundred feet of the fence. A moment more and they would have reached it.

"Fire!"

Smoke and flame belched from the deadly angle of the fence. The Union line reeled, staggered, and collapsed. A ringing cheer went up from the Grays.

And the plucky little company continued to hold that part of the line. Their success was due to perfect discipline and concentrated action.

There was no desultory, scattering fire to meet a charging column, as in most cases where the men loaded and fired at will, so that half of them had no load in their guns at a critical moment.

But the regular and destructive volleys of the Grays swept the foe back every time like a blast from the furnace of Vulcan.

Thus the Grays held their position, and always with slight loss of life. Other companies were driven, and returned, only to be driven again.

Thus the fight went on.

History records that the battle of Savage's Station was not decisive. But it could not be denied that it was a Confederate victory.

Sumner held his ground stubbornly. But after dark he retreated through the White Oak swamp, leaving twenty-five hundred wounded soldiers behind.

With the setting of the sun the fighting had lulled, in fact, practically ceased. Both sides were exhausted and fain to quit.

If General Magruder had dreamed of Sumner's purpose

of retreat, he might have dealt him a hard and perhaps fatal blow in the night.

But not until morning did he know of the Union general's purpose. By that time he was beyond pursuit.

Facing each other, as darkness settled down, the two armies rested for a brief time. Their pickets were within hailing distance, their campfires glowed in parallel lines.

Will Prentiss and his Grays had sought a comfortable place for a bivouac. The day's fighting had been strenuous, indeed, and they were tired.

They were fain to seek sleep and rest, but Fate had not so ordered it.

An orderly came into the circle of firelight, and demanded:

"Is Captain Prentiss here?"

"Yes," replied Will, stepping forward, "I am he."

"General Magruder wishes you to report at once to him in his tent."

"Convey my respects to General Magruder, and tell him I will respond at once."

The orderly hurried away. Will donned his cap and buckled on his sword. In a few moments he was on his way to Magruder's tent.

That general sat at his table with a cloud upon his brow as Will entered. His face lit up a little, however.

"Ah, Prentiss," he exclaimed, "I am glad to see you! Really, I have come to regard you as my most indispensable adjunct in this campaign. To tell you the truth, I place reliance in you."

"I am pleased to know that, General Magruder," said Will. "In what way can I serve you?"

Magruder turned his papers over, and then said:

"Are you familiar with the Charles City road, leading out of Richmond?"

"Yes, to a fair extent."

"Do you know a tavern called White's?"

"Oh, yes! It is not so very far from Richmond," replied Will.

"Good! Now let me tell you something. At half-past ten to-night two men will meet in the tap-room of that hotel. One is tall and dark and wears a heavy black mustache. He dresses in Southern fashion. You can pick him out in any crowd, for he has a scar on the right cheek shaped like an inverted horseshoe."

Will was interested. He looked at the general sharply.

"The other," pursued the general, "is short and stout and wears a half-Quaker costume. He carries a testament and is apparently a quasi-preacher of the exhorting type."

"I see," said Will, slowly.

"Now, Prentiss, bear these men in mind. They will meet in this tap-room at half-past ten. They will meet as strangers, but they will soon become friendly."

The general cleared his throat.

"That seems a commonplace incident, don't it?" he resumed. "But let me tell you that the fate of the Confederacy may depend upon it!"

"You surprise and startle me," said Will. "Who are these men?"

"That must be discovered. It is known that one is a

traitor and a spy, namely, the one with the odd scar on his face. The other is a messenger from Abe Lincoln! The spy is to render such information to the messenger as may be of value to the Washington authorities."

"I see!" said Will, nodding quietly. "It is a prearranged meeting."

"Yes."

"How did you hear of it?"

"Through Clarkson, one of our spies. He has given me the whole yarn on his honor. It is too late for me to see Lee. I must take the matter into my own hands."

"What do you propose to do?"

"Capture those precious scoundrels."

"Capture them?"

"Yes, and that is what I expect you to do. Do not say a word, Prentiss. You are my only hope. I know your men are all used up. You do not need to take your whole company. Let it be a small detachment. But arrest those two spies, and bring them to me."

Will arose instantly.

"Your orders shall be obeyed."

"You understand all thoroughly, do you?"

"Oh, yes! What is the name of those two conspirators?"

"That is the rub! We don't know! We wish to learn. The best way to do that is to arrest them."

"That is right," agreed Will. "Very well, General Magruder. Do I understand you entrust this mission to me?"

"Yes, sir."

"I will not disappoint you."

"I feel sure of that."

"As soon as I have the men I will bring them here to you. Until then I will say au revoir."

The general waved his hand in adieu. Will at once set out for his own camp. When he entered it, he came face to face with his sister, Nell Prentiss.

The young girl's manner was that of one somewhat excited.

"Will Prentiss," she said, in a low tone, "something is up. What is it?"

"Now, sister mine," said Will, "you know you ought not to bother me with such foolish questions. I have many affairs. I cannot tell them all."

She smiled in a curious way.

"You need not," she said, "for I know them all."

"You do?"

"Yes! You are going to a certain tavern on the Charles City road, and——"

"Hush!" protested Will. "Don't speak so loud. It will not do."

"You are to find there two men. One is dark and the other is fair. They are foes of the Confederacy."

Will stared at his sister in surprise.

"Are you a witch?"

"Am I not right?"

"Partly right, yes," admitted Will. "But how did you learn all this?"

She laughed lightly.

"I am a spy myself, and the story was given me by another spy—a man named Clarkson. That is all."

"He is the fellow," exclaimed Will, excitedly. "Well, I am to go there to-night and capture them both."

Nell Prentiss drew a deep breath.

"You will get two of the biggest rogues in the world," she said, "you may be sure of that. I am going along to give you help."

"But I am going to take a detachment of the Grays."

"How many men?"

"Twenty."

Her face changed, and she laughed in a peculiar way that puzzled Will. But she said:

"That will not debar me, Will. It is quite necessary that I should go. You will not refuse me."

Will hesitated a moment. It did not seem to him like a praiseworthy enterprise for a woman. But he did not wish to displease his sister. So he said:

"Very good, you shall go."

Will now confided his plans to Fred Randolph. The young lieutenant listened with interest.

"Let me go with you, Will?" he asked.

"I cannot," replied Will. "It is necessary for you to remain here in charge of the Grays. They may be called into action early in the morning before I can return."

Fred was much disappointed, but he saw the logic of it and yielded.

Will now picked out his men. He selected a dozen of his pluckiest boys. Among them was Joe Spotswood.

They were soon ready for the expedition. They were armed with pistols, but carried carbines instead of muskets. They wore light fatigue uniforms and were in light marching order.

Thus equipped, they set out. Will had no doubt but that they could reach White's Tavern, on the Charles City road, before the hour of half-past ten.

The course they took was across the country, until they came to a woods road, which took them out finally on to the Charles City highway.

It must be said that they had not covered this distance on foot. They rode horses furnished them by General Magruder's order.

Now that they were out on the Charles City road they turned and galloped toward Richmond. They had not gone far when Nell, who rode beside Will, gave a sharp cry:

"Look back there, Will! What can that mean?"

Will Prentiss turned in his saddle and looked back toward the hills. He gave a great start.

A great red glare lay against the distant hillside. It could not be mistaken.

Some building was burning. Will watched the weirdly fascinating spectacle a moment.

CHAPTER X.

THE APPOINTMENT.

"It looks like raiders' work," said Joe Spotswood. "Perhaps Myrick is turning some poor countryman out of a home."

Will gave an exclamation.

"Nell," he said, "how near is that to the cabin of old man Frame?"

Nell gave a great start. She saw what was in Will's mind.

"It looks bad," she said, seriously. "It is in exactly the locality of the old man's cabin home."

"You mean Cy Frame's house?" asked Joe.

"Yes."

"Mercy! I trust not! He, poor fellow, needs help badly! He would starve if turned out of his home."

"There is Enid——" began Nell.

"Her powers are limited. Poor old Cy! I feel bad for him. Do you suppose it is the work of Myrick?" said Will.

Nell nodded slowly.

"It is the work of nobody else," she replied. "It is a terrible thing! He ought to be hunted down and hung!"

"He is too shrewd and wily to be caught in any ordinary trap. I wish I had time. I would ride over there and see what I could do for Cy."

But this was plainly out of the question. It was necessary, first of all, to capture the two men at the tavern.

Will's veins tingled, and he felt the tremendous responsibility of the enterprise. But he must not fail.

He at once went to work with a system. He knew that for the whole party to ride up to the tavern would be apt to excite the suspicions of the inmates. It might yet be a question whether the tavern keeper was in the plot or not.

As Will and his party approached the tavern, which was at the apex of the crossroads, they could see its lights streaming out into the roadway.

Will now called a halt.

It was arranged that he should go ahead and enter the tavern as a traveler. He could assume the part of an officer on furlough.

By keeping his eyes open he could not fail to see his men if they kept the assumed appointment.

Then, once he had made sure of them, it would be an easy matter to signal the others, and then the arrest could be made.

So the plan was laid. Nell, all this while, had said nothing. She did not ask the privilege of accompanying Will to the tavern even.

She knew that suspicion might at once be aroused if she were seen there. So, with all arrangements completed, Will set out for the tavern.

Joe Spotswood came along a slight distance in the rear. He was to remain on the porch, or within easy signalling distance.

When Will reached the tavern, he crossed the porch and entered. As he did so he saw a couple of Confederate officers sitting in a dark corner of the porch chatting.

In the corridor were a number of men of the native type. He passed into the tap-room.

Here fully a score of planters, soldiers and civilians were sitting or standing and engaged in conversation. The air was heavy with tobacco smoke.

At the bar a number of men were drinking. Will re-

membered the description of his men, and looked about him.

He saw a number of tall men with heavy mustaches, but the right one was not there.

Suddenly he gave a start.

Across the tap-room, there stalked a man whose appearance would excite attention anywhere.

Tall and lanky, yet powerful; he was dressed in dark clothes, and wore a wide-brimmed hat. He might have been a wealthy planter from the cotton belt, so far as his appearance went.

Not at once did Will get a fair look at his face.

Then he took in the wide forehead, deep set, burning eyes, the long nose and protuding jaw. On the cheekbone was the inverted horseshoe!

It was the spy beyond a doubt. Will felt a shiver. Before him was the man who was selling his country.

The young captain felt an instinctive aversion for him, even as he would have felt for a snake. There seemed something cold and slimy and reptilian about him.

The traitor went to the bar and called for whiskey. He tossed off a draught. Just then a little man with a white felt hat came up to him.

In a voice loud enough for Will to hear, he said:

"How de do, Mr. Moleson? I wanted to ask ye what the prospect is for peace. I've heard that Abe Lincoln and his backers want to settle, and are willing to give big concessions."

"Oh, yes," said Moleson, blandly, "the Confederacy has already won its case. In a few days there won't be a greasy rag left of their army. What do you think of their generals, eh?"

Both men laughed and chuckled.

"McClellan knows how to retreat, even if he don't fight."

"That requires generalship."

"Oh, yes."

With this they both laughed. Will almost felt the humor of the situation himself.

He knew that just now the Union army was an object of ridicule. General McClellan and his inexplicable maneuvers was the laughing stock of the Confederate armies.

It is said that there is always a man for the hour. A great crisis was at hand, but the man, where was he? It was a serious reflection for Will Prentiss. He even felt sympathy for the Union commander.

But presently Moleson was left alone again. He walked up and down uneasily before the bar. It was plain that he was looking for some one.

Suddenly the barroom door opened. Into the room strode a man, at sight of whom Will gave a great start. He knew him almost instantly.

"Irving Black!" he muttered. "That is queer! I have always believed him loyal."

Irving Black looked about the barroom for a moment, then his gaze lit up at sight of Moleson.

He approached him instantly. They clasped hands.

"I'm glad to see you, Moleson!"

"Same here, Mr. Black! I suppose you have some news for me?"

"This is too public a place to speak of the subject. Come with me and we will talk the matter over!"

Moleson inclined his head.

"Lead the way," he said, "I'll follow."

Will overheard this much. Then the two men left the room. They crossed the porch and went out into the night.

Nothing could have been better. Will followed them like a shadow. When they crept away into the gloom, and paused under a spreading oak tree some distance down the highway, he was ensconced in the gloom but a few feet away.

In fact, so near was he that he heard every word spoken. And it was of the keenest interest.

Plans for the breaking of the Richmond defenses were discussed. Secrets of the Confederate works were revealed.

In fact, the traitor showed his hand absolutely. Moleson listened intently, and finally said:

"Black, you are rightly named!"

"What do you mean?" demanded the traitor.

"A man who can play so treacherous a part as you could not well carry a better name!"

Black laughed discordantly.

"I have done you good service," he said. "Moreover, looking at it in the proper light, I am a patriot, because I am giving aid to the Government."

"Not your own Government!"

"You mean the Confederacy?"

"Yes."

"Well, I am no longer loyal to the Confederacy. I don't see why I have not a right to betray its secrets."

"An undoubted right! Keep it up, and you'll not only grow wealthy, but increase in virtue and self-esteem."

"Your satire is misplaced, Moleson."

"Is it? Well, perhaps so. At any rate, you are making money now. And you know that before the war you were but a little pettifogging lawyer, hardly able to get a brief."

Black laughed uneasily.

"I'm not so black as I'm painted," he said, with an attempt at wit. "By the way, Moleson, I'm to enter the service. I have been promised a colonel's commission. It is no light honor."

"Surely not, and no surer passport to the beautiful 'Gates Ajar.' If you follow it up earnestly, you will receive a decent burial, wrapped in the Confederate flag, with loud volleys fired over your grave!"

"Stop! You know I just abhor such a thing. I couldn't bear to think of being buried in such a manner," cried Black.

"I refrain," said Moleson, with a cynical laugh. "I trust you will be a general before you die. That will assure us all a long life."

"I don't care for trifling! You have misjudged me. The commission promised me is in your army. I am, you see, a loyal citizen of the United States."

"Are you?" sneered Moleson. "No one will throw his hat higher and yell louder for Jeff Davis than you. Yet you stand ready to drive a knife into his back. You are a traitor, pure and simple!"

Black snarled angrily.

"You don't want to irritate me too far," he gritted. "You know there is a limit to my endurance."

"Is there?" said Moleson, contemptuously. "Well, I am not returning surfeited with news which you have given me!"

"No, you're not!" roared Black. "You are a fool! Do you think I can accomplish the impossible? I have furnished you every plan of the Richmond forts, and how to enter them without a struggle. Is not that worth something?" and he leered at Moleson.

But Will had heard enough. He was convinced of the guilt of both. He knew they were rascals and deserved hanging.

He gave the signal to Joe Spotswood, who at once brought the men up. They surrounded the villains before they could be aware of it in the darkness.

The result was exciting in the extreme. Will stepped out of the gloom, and said:

"My friends, your game is up. You are under arrest and will make no resistance, if you are wise."

Black gave a yell of terror and dismay and bolted into the gloom. But he ran into the arms of the Grays.

Moleson, on the other hand, stood cool and indifferent. He seemed to view Black's pleadings with supreme contempt.

"I am an agent of the U. S. Government," he said. "I demand the recognition and privileges of a prisoner of war. Hang that barking cur as he deserves, but you can't hang me!"

CHAPTER XI.

THRILLING INCIDENTS.

Will Prentiss made no reply to the prisoner's remarks. He directed the boys to bind both of them.

Then the horses were brought up. The prisoners were mounted and bound to the saddle. Behind each one of them a soldier mounted.

Will Prentiss knew that it would be well not to linger in the vicinity. He had accomplished his purpose and the mission given him by General Magruder.

He had now only to return to camp and report with the prisoners. Clarkson, the spy, had been right in his assumption that the two spies would meet at White's Tavern.

Along the Charles City road now the little cavalcade went.

Will knew that it would be well to proceed with caution, for they might, at any moment, run into danger.

While it was true that they were practically within the Confederate lines, at the same time raiding parties of the Union army traversed the region at times even to the very rear of the Confederate forces.

For his small band to run into such might mean the destruction of all his brilliant work. And now that he had captured his prisoners he was by no means willing to lose them.

Joe Spotswood and one of the Grays rode ahead as scouts or videttes. It was not until they were nearly a mile down the highway that Will recalled a startling fact.

His sister, Nell, was no longer with them. He turned and dropped back, to make sure that she was not in the rear.

A thrill of alarm seized the boy captain. What did it mean?

Had harm befallen her?

He could hardly believe this. Yet it did not seem possible that she would leave without warning.

One of the Grays reined his horse back, and saluted:

"Are you looking for some one, Captain Prentiss?" he asked.

"Yes, Barclay," replied Will. "I am looking for my sister."

"I thought so, sir. She is gone."

"Gone?"

"Yes. She left us while you were at the tavern, sir. She asked me to give you this, sir."

The trooper handed Will a note. In the darkness he could not read it. But Barclay struck a match.

In its light Will read:

"Dear Will:—You have your men all right. You have not known it, but their capture was a part of my mission in this region. Clarkson and myself have been working on this case for some days, and I came with you to make sure that there would be no mistake. Our work is not yet done. There are other threads to pick up in a treacherous plot against the Government at Richmond. We have only so far secured the tools of the ringleaders. The latter we hope to get next. So I hope you will get back to Magruder safely with the prisoners. I need only say that other work now calls me away. I shall meet Clarkson to-night at a point near Richmond. May God be with you, my dear brother, and preserve you through all these trying times. You need only know that I am safe and doing valiant work for the cause, and remain always your loving sister,

"NELL."

Will Prentiss drew a deep breath, and folding the note placed it in his bosom.

"Dear Nell," he said, "she is the pluckiest girl in the South. She is a wonder. So that is what she was up to, eh? Well, it was a surprise!"

He at once ceased to worry further about his sister. The little party now had reached the crossroad which turned to go into the swamp, and by a short cut to the Confederate lines at Savage's Station.

Suddenly the two troopers in the lead, Spotswood and his companion, gave sharp exclamations. Their horses bolted, and for a moment were uncontrollable.

Into the roadway, out of the swamp, there had staggered a nondescript figure. A gasping voice cried:

"Help! For the love of heaven, if you are friends of the Confederacy, give me help!"

In an instant Will rode forward. He dismounted and approached the figure in the roadway.

"What is this?" he exclaimed. "Who are you?"

"I am a loyal Confederate officer!" was the reply. "My troop has been cut to pieces by Myrick's guerrillas. I am wounded and exhausted! Oh, it was awful!"

A sharp cry of amazement broke from the lips of Will Prentiss.

"Great Cæsar!" he cried, "it is Karl Merton!"

"Will Prentiss!" cried the young captain of the Carolina troop. "Merciful powers, God has guided my footsteps!"

"You may well say that! Bring a light, boys. What can we do for you, Merton?"

"Nothing for me!" cried the young captain, feverishly. "But for her—oh, she has been taken away by that monster, Myrick. I fought for her, but my men were massacred. I escaped only by a miracle. I must have help! I must pursue them before it is too late!"

Will put his arm about the anguished youth.

"Be calm," he said; "don't lose courage. All will come out well. We will save her, have no fear. But before we go further, tell us all about it."

Merton, with an effort, composed himself. One of the boys had found a pitch knot, and this made an excellent torch.

In its yellow light Merton's pale, blood-stained face mirrored his emotions, as he proceeded with his story.

"It was awful!" he said. "After you left we posted guards in the pass. We did not dream of an attack. But suddenly, from an unlooked-for quarter, a horde of the guerrillas rushed in upon us. We fought as well as we could, but were overwhelmed. My men were scattered. It was Myrick and his foul band.

"They at once proceeded to shoot all prisoners, giving absolutely no quarter. The only life they spared was that of Enid—and——"

His voice broke, and he choked up with emotion. Will Prentiss and his companions had listened with horror.

"My soul!" exclaimed the boy captain of the Grays. "Do you mean to say that old Cy Frame——"

"He is dead! His body is ashes, mingled with those of his cabin home."

For a moment there was an oppressive silence after this ominous story. It was broken by Will.

"That was murder!"

"Yes, most foul!"

Will Prentiss turned and sprang into his saddle.

"Merton," he said, "are you able to ride?"

"I am."

"Mount with Barclay, then. We will push on to General Magruder's headquarters as fast as we can. Then I will mount the Grays and we will hunt Myrick to the ends of the earth. He shall hang for this!"

"God bless you, Will Prentiss!" said Merton, in a fervent tone. "I trust you will have Magruder's consent."

"I have not the least doubt of it. Forward, all! Quick trot!"

The little company swept away into the swamp road. They kept on for fully an hour.

They met no foe. Twice they were hailed by scouting

parties. But, in due course, the campfires of Magruder's line burst into view.

Straight to General Magruder's tent rode the party. The prisoners were dismounted, and an orderly took the men to the General.

A few moments later Will Prentiss, with the prisoners under guard and Karl Merton behind, entered the general's tent.

General Magruder's face showed the keenest of pleasure. He scrutinized the prisoners, and said:

"You have done well, Prentiss. Indeed, you deserve great credit, for you have captured the two keenest foxes in the whole South."

"I think, sir, that the credit is not wholly due us," said Will.

General Magruder smiled.

"Your sister Nell is a wonderful young woman," he said. "She has performed her part well."

"I never dreamed that she was in the game," laughed Will, "though I wondered why she was so much interested in to-night's project."

General Magruder bent his gaze upon the prisoners.

Black began to cringe and plead:

"I was led into it, general," he pleaded. "I am not a traitor to the Government. I meant to trap this scoundrel here."

Moleson turned a contemptuous gaze upon the late informer and spy.

"General," he said, in his deep voice, "no doubt God could have made a greater coward and traitor than he. But he never did. He is a complete liar. I am just what I am, an agent of the U. S. Government, seeking information to the advantage of my Government. This man has given it to me. Deal with him as you please, but I demand the privileges of a prisoner of war!"

"You will receive justice, both of you," said General Magruder.

"That is all I ask."

"Then you are satisfied?"

"Yes."

"Very well. This man is a traitor and a coward. You are a spy and sneak. It is the absolute rule to deal equal justice to such. You shall both be shot at fifty paces tomorrow at sunrise!"

Black let out a wild bellow of fear. But Moleson, though he grew livid, only smiled coldly.

"Is that your idea of justice?" he asked.

"It is," replied General Magruder, "and it does not differ one whit from that administered by the military courts of your own army."

Moleson was silent. He was trembling in every limb, but his crafty gaze was running about the tent. Black was blubbering and pleading.

"Take them away!" said General Magruder, sternly.

Will gave the order, and the two miscreants, under guard, were led out of the tent.

They paid the score, by the general's orders, at sunrise.

So was balked the conspiracy to deliver Richmond to the Union forces.

General Magruder turned when the prisoners had gone and said:

"Well, Prentiss, what else have you to tell me?"

"I have a favor to ask," said Will.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PURSUIT.

General Magruder bent a keen, searching gaze upon the boy captain.

"A favor?"

"Yes, sir."

"Well, I hardly think it will be refused. You have earned it most certainly. What is it?"

"This is Captain Karl Merton, of General Longstreet's division. He has met with a terrible reverse. While holding the pass in the hills, where we were so successful in resisting the flank attack of the Union forces, his company was attacked and wiped out by Steve Myrick and his guerrillas. No quarter was given. Every man captured was slaughtered."

General Magruder's brows contracted. The veins in his temples swelled like whipcords.

"What!" he exclaimed. "That is murder! In these civilized times does a commander refuse quarter?"

"This man Myrick is not an accredited officer of the Union army, though he uses the Union flag to fight under."

"Then he should be captured and hung!"

"Exactly, sir! If you will grant me the favor, I would be pleased to attempt the execution of that order."

General Magruder hesitated.

"In the morning we shall renew hostilities," he said. "We will need you and your company."

"I will be on hand in the morning," said Will. "If I do not round up the guerrillas before then I will return."

"In which case you have full permission," said General Magruder. "But I request you to take sufficient force to surround Myrick and prevent his escape."

"I will ask Colonel Bell with his men to go with me."

"Very good! That will be better."

"As we can succeed better mounted, I am compelled to ask for horses."

"You shall have them," said General Magruder. "I wish you success."

Will and young Merton left the general's tent. In a few moments they were interviewing Colonel Bell.

The colonel was only too pleased to take part in the enterprise.

"My men will be glad to co-operate," he cried. "I hope we can get Myrick."

"We will certainly do our best," said Will. "Now, Captain Merton, we will get ready."

It was near the midnight hour when the Grays, mounted, galloped out upon their night expedition. Behind them rode Colonel Bell's men.

As Myrick had left the hills, it was not deemed good policy to go thither. A course was taken to the south and crossing the Charles City road.

Below this was another road, called the Central road, and along this they galloped. They were now following the flank of the Union army.

But it was not at all likely that Myrick would join forces with the Union army, or even seek to enter its lines.

He was a guerrilla, and could hardly hope to receive the confidence of the Union generals, for his standing was little better than that of a bushwhacker.

Down the Central road galloped the detachment of Confederate soldiers. Will and Colonel Bell rode in advance.

Suddenly a startling thing happened. A sharp report broke the night air just ahead, and Will's horse went down in a heap. The young captain was thrown, though luckily not injured.

He was upon his feet in an instant. The troop had pulled up, and a dozen had dismounted and rushed to the young captain's aid.

But he sprang up and cried:

"I'm all right! Have no fear! Bring up a spare horse!"

This was quickly done and Will mounted again. From the darkness other shots were coming now, and another horse went down.

Will gave quick orders to deploy, for it was certain that a force of some magnitude was in their path. Scouts were sent out.

These returned soon with a most startling report.

The roadway ahead was fortified with a breastwork of logs. Behind these Union soldiers were intrenched.

Will understood at once what this meant. The road was held to protect a retreat of some kind.

He did not know then that Sumner was rapidly falling back through the White Oak swamp. It was necessary to hold this road to guard against a flank attack.

For some moments Will considered the policy of engaging in battle at this point.

He could see little to gain, for his purpose was not to seek engagements, but to run down and capture Myrick.

But it was certain that they could continue no further in this direction, unless the battery in front was carried. Will discussed the matter with Colonel Bell.

"Certainly we don't want to sacrifice men," said Colonel Bell. "Besides, to engage this body of the foe means a loss of time."

Will was at once decided.

"You are right," he declared. "We will pass them by."

So the Grays drew back in good order and proceeded to deploy further south, toward the Newmarket road. In doing this, as after events proved, they were wise.

The obstructing battery in the Central road was left to its own device. The Grays were soon far below its location.

While there was no moon, the night was not exactly dark. The stars gave light, and objects were visible some distance away. The Grays, some while later, emerged into the Newmarket road.

As they did so the vidette came galloping back.

"Captain Prentiss," he called, "there is a conflagration of some sort just ahead."

A stretch of woods cut off the view from a bend in the highway. It was beyond this that the vidette had seen the conflagration.

The Grays now pushed forward with great rapidity. In a few moments they were given a startling surprise.

Across the country, not more than half a mile, the blaze of burning buildings was reflected against the sky.

Will knit his brows, and for a moment studied the scene. Colonel Bell was at his elbow.

"It looks like the work of raiders," said the colonel. "What do you think?"

Will nodded slowly.

"Myrick is at the bottom of it."

"Then he must be over there."

"Perhaps not. But it indicates that we are close upon his heels."

"What is the order?"

"Forward!"

In another moment the troop was riding rapidly down a side road which led to the burning buildings.

It was not long before they had reached the dooryard of the burning house. There was no sign of living being about the house.

If it had been tenanted, the tenants were not to be seen about the place. Will quickly sent scouts out to, if possible, learn in which direction the raiders had gone.

He was waiting for a report, when one of the guards gave a hoarse hail. Out of the scrub growth crawled a man.

He was of the farmer type, and his attitude was that of terror. He suffered himself to be led into the firelight.

"Who are you?" asked Will, sharply, as he scanned the fellow's face.

"My name is John Saunders."

"Where did you come from?"

"From the bushes out there."

"Yes, but where do you belong?"

"I did belong here," replied the man, sullenly, "but heaven knows where I shall find another home!"

"Was this your home?"

"Yes."

"Who set it afire?"

"I reckon it was Steve Myrick's gang. They rode in here a little while ago and demanded chickens. I gave them all I had. They wanted more, and said I had them hidden. They then drove my family out of the house and fired the buildings."

The man's voice was hard and bitter.

"I'm a loyal Confederate," he said. "But if I can't be defended from such dogs I'll change my views."

"My dear sir, we are doing our best to defend such as you," said Will, earnestly. "This fellow Myrick we are now pursuing, and shall hang him as soon as we can find him."

"He deserves it!"

"Yes, he does. Tell me in which way did he go?"

"He rode away yonder to the east. I think he has a rendezvous over there in the Big Swamp."

"You think he has gone into the swamp?"

"Yes."

"Where is your family now?"

"Hiding out here in the woods."

"Did they kill or injure anybody?"

"No, but we ran as soon as they came. I got my family away at once. I'd like to meet that scoundrel alone sometime."

The farmer's spirit was hard and bitter. It was not strange that the spirit of revenge was upon him.

"All right, my friend," said Will, "we will hang him for you as soon as we can get him."

"I hope that will be soon."

"I think it will. You are not destitute, are you? Have you anything left?"

"Nothing!" replied Saunders, in a shaking voice. "We have not a morsel nor a penny. They took it all! My wife has an infant in arms!"

Will instantly straightened up. His hand went into his pocket, and he drew out some money.

"Joe Spotswood," he said, "I want you to pass around your cap. Let us give this poor man a new start. Then we will go and hang Myrick."

A ripping cheer broke from the Grays. They responded generously.

A capful of cash was placed at Saunders' feet. It was certain that enough had been raised to keep the wolf from his door for some time.

Overcome, the poor farmer raised his hands as if to invoke a blessing. But the troop dashed on.

Will knew that the Big Swamp was a suitable place for the headquarters of such as Myrick. It covered a vast area, and was intersected with creeks and sloughs.

In this place fugitive negroes had been known to find refuge for months from their pursuing owners, and only the bloodhounds had at last brought them out.

Into this swamp, therefore, rode the Grays.

A musket shot in the darkness was warning that their

coming was known. Pickets had been posted by the guerrilla chief.

It was fair to assume that, returning from his night's raid, he had sought his swamp den for rest. It was not Will's purpose to permit him this happy privilege. So the Grays dashed into the swamp.

CHAPTER XIII.

AT MYERS' TAVERN.

The picket guard of the guerrillas was instantly driven in. To make sure of surrounding Myrick, Will now divided his force.

Colonel Bell, with part of it, went to the right, and Will, with the balance, went to the left. These two lines were quickly elongated and converged.

This part of the swamp was devoid of treacherous bog-holes, so that the attacking party were able to move rapidly and with safety.

A scattering fire was kept up with the guerrilla guards, who fell back with rapidity. It was certain that a collision with the main body of the foe must soon occur.

Will urged his boys on rapidly. He was confident and much pleased to bring Myrick to bay.

Beside him all the while was Karl Merton, whose haggard face showed his great suffering of mind.

Suddenly the Grays were met with a volley. This was indication that they had hit upon the main body of the guerrillas.

At once the Grays answered, and all along the line the firing became general. Its result could only be guessed.

But, after a period, Will advanced his men, with the trees for shelter. He then became convinced that the foe was falling back.

Far away, on the other side, Colonel Bell was also hotly engaged. The rattle of the muskets became general.

"Give it to 'em, boys!" called Fred Randolph, as he walked along the line, for the horses had been left outside the swamp, and the Grays were on foot.

But the Grays scarcely needed urging. They pressed forward eagerly, keeping up the fire and forcing the guerrillas back.

Finally the gleam of fires was seen among the trees. The battle was now waxing hot.

Will saw that they had pushed the guerrillas back upon their camp. It was an omen of victory.

Hotter grew the fire. Will saw that the guerrillas were not holding their own. In a close encounter they could not stand.

On the other side he heard Bell. It was evident that the plucky colonel had actually encircled the guerrillas.

This decided Will upon a supreme effort. The order went along the line:

"Fix bayonets!"

Firing ceased on the Confederate side. The rattle of steel went along the line. It was heard by the guerrillas.

They knew well what it meant, and it had its effect.

The charge was never made.

Suddenly, from the smoke and din, came a loud yell:

"Hold on, Johnnies! We surrender!"

At first Will was not sure that this was legitimate. But suddenly, through the firelight, there strode a figure flourishing a white flag.

At once the order was given to halt. The truce-bearer came forward, and Will met him.

Then he saw that the guerrillas had certainly met with harsh treatment. The truce-bearer was himself wounded, and he cried:

"Ye've mighty near exterminated us! We couldn't stand yer fire!"

"Is that so?" cried Will. "We ought to wipe you out, root and branch!"

"That would be murder!" cried the truce-bearer, in terror.

"It is a dose of your own medicine. Those who refuse to give quarter should hardly expect it in return."

"But we surrender. For heaven's sake, don't kill us!"

"File your men out and let them lay down their arms. Where is your commander?"

"Do you mean Myrick?"

"Yes."

"Oh, he's gone."

"Gone?" echoed Karl Merton, in a hollow voice, as he leaned forward. "Do you mean that he has escaped?"

"Yes," replied the truce-bearer, "he threw up the fight and skipped when you first came into the swamp. I think it's all owing to that pretty girl he had with him. She has turned his head."

Merton gave a deep groan. He turned to Will, who said:

"Don't despair, we will catch him!"

"It may be too late!"

"No, don't believe that." Will turned to the truce-bearer again. "Do you know where he has gone or which route he has taken in escaping?"

The fellow hesitated. Then he said:

"The boys have stuck by Steve through thick and thin. We would have got out of this scrape if he had stuck by us. I see no reason for defending him. Yes, I'll tell you! But you must agree to one thing."

"What?"

"That you'll take my parole."

"Why do you ask that? It will mean death if you are captured again."

"I'll never fight again. I'm tired of it, and I want to go back home."

Will studied the guerrilla's face a moment. Then he asked:

"What is your name?"

"Harmon."

"Well, Harmon, I'm going to take your word. If you will lead us to the present hiding place of Myrick or place him in our hands you shall have your parole."

"Done!" cried Harmon. "But I must go back and report to our lieutenant."

"All right. Let your men file out and lay down their arms. Then I will single you out."

The truce-bearer darted back. Firing had now ceased, for the line opposed to Bell on the other side had surrendered also.

The guerrillas formed in line and laid down their arms. Will estimated that there were over five hundred of them.

The surrender was formally completed. Then Will turned to Bell.

"Colonel," he said, "I have a favor to ask."

"Ah!" said the colonel. "What is it?"

"I will ask you to take your company and take charge of the prisoners. You will march them into our lines and report to General Magruder."

"And you——"

"I will take my boys and pursue Myrick. When I have run him to earth I will return and report also."

Colonel Bell saluted.

"Very well," he agreed, "it shall be as you say."

A short while later the captured prisoners, mounted on their own horses, were being marched out of the swamp by Colonel Bell's regiment. The Virginia Grays, detached, now mounted their horses and formed outside the swamp.

The guide, Harmon, now said:

"It is my opinion that Myrick will go down to White's Landing, on the James. He can't get there to-night, so he'll probably stop at Myers' Tavern, on the White's Landing road."

"How far is that?" asked Will.

"Eight miles."

"He is well on the way there now?"

"Yes. You see, Billy Myers is half Yankee, and he'll hide Myrick all right somewhere about his place. We'll find him all right."

"You are right, we will!" cried Will. "Forward, Grays! Right wheel! Trot!"

Away went the little command. Karl Merton, silent and desperate, rode in front.

For a long time the Grays kept on in the darkness, taking crossroads and lanes for a short cut, as Harmon knew it.

It seemed as if the night was nigh spent, when lights gleamed ahead.

"It is the tavern," said Harmon. "See! there are horses in the yard!"

This was seen to be true. Horses were tethered outside

the structure, and even at that distance the call of the travelers was heard.

The door of the tavern was heard to open, and loud voices were smothered when it closed.

"How is that?" cried Will. "It looks as if they had just arrived."

"That is true, captain," declared Harmon. "We might have overtaken them on the road."

This was a startling fact. But the Grays were now drawing nearer to the tavern. Will drew rein, and the little company halted.

An idea had occurred to the boy captain.

"We can't afford to take any chances," he said. "If Myrick is in the tavern we must get him. He must be allowed no opportunity to escape!"

So he ordered the Grays to deploy and completely surround the structure. This was quickly done.

Then Will selected a few of the boys, and, turning to Karl, said:

"Come! Let us see if we shall get the rascal!"

They advanced now to the tavern gate. A guard, who was with the horses, would have given the alarm.

But Will covered him with his pistol, and said:

"Make an outcry and you are a dead man. There is no escape. This place is all surrounded."

The fellow slunk back. Will stepped up to the tavern door and quietly opened it. He stepped into a sort of hallway, or entry.

Beyond this was a wide, low-ceiled room with a great fireplace at the back, where logs were burning.

At one side was the bar. About the room, in various attitudes of ease, were a dozen of the guerrillas.

Steve Myrick himself sat on the edge of a table. He was swinging his foot and smoking a pipe.

Before him, in the center of the floor, stood Enid.

The mountain maid was deathly white and haggard. Yet she stood there, the center of the group of villains, with head erect, and proud, her eyes flashing like stars.

Will paused a moment in the entry. At his shoulder was Karl Merton, trembling and eager. But Will held him back with an outstretched arm.

"Oho! my pretty piece of baggage!" said Myrick, with a coarse laugh. "You are still defiant, are you? So you don't care to wed a guerrilla chief?"

"I demand you set me free," said Enid, forcibly. "How dare you hold me a prisoner thus? Is there no man among you who has Southern blood in his veins? Will none of you come to my aid?"

This dramatic appeal, flung at the group of villains, met with a loud burst of laughter.

"Now's yer chance, Bill! Go to ther rescue of a pooty gal!" jeered one of the guerrillas. "It's jest like a story book!"

"Yes!" cried a ringing voice, "there is one here who will

defend a helpless woman with his life! You cowardly curs, let me see you offer her insult now!"

CHAPTER XIV.

ALL ENDS WELL.

Karl Merton had broken away from Will and bounded into the room. He confronted the gang fiercely and with sublime courage.

The effect was startling.

Every man sprang up. Myrick, with an oath, leaped back and pulled out a pistol.

"Fiends!" he yelled. "What's this? Where did you come from?"

But Merton had sprung to Enid's side and caught her tottering form in his arms.

It was a tableau. The two lovers, standing in the midst of the gang, made a stirring picture.

But Will now crossed the threshold with folded arms. He fixed his gaze on Myrick, and said:

"You might as well throw up the game, my friends! You are done!"

Livid with astonishment and fear, the guerrilla chief faced the young captain of the Grays.

"Who are you?" he demanded, coarsely.

"I am Captain Will Prentiss, of the Virginia Grays, at your service."

Myrick looked furtively about him. But Will smiled, and said:

"This place is absolutely surrounded. There is no chance for you."

The guerrilla turned to his men.

"That is a bluff," he said. "Seize him, men!"

But Will placed his fingers in his mouth and blew a shrill whistle. In an instant the rush of feet was heard outside, and then every door and window was filled with the Grays.

A sickly pallor came over the outlaw's face. He saw that the game was up.

He saw that he had reached the end of the plank. Only the abyss of death was before him.

"Curse the luck!" he gritted. "It was her pretty face did it! It's all up! I surrender, captain. I demand the privileges of a prisoner of war."

"I refuse them," replied Will. "You can ask only for justice."

"Will you give me that?"

"Yes; in full measure!"

The villain glared at Will in a doubtful way. The significance of his words did not escape him.

"You—you will not hang me?"

"Ten feet in the air! Just as high as is necessary to further the ends of justice!"

A hoarse, gurgling cry escaped the villain. He made a mad plunge for the door, but a dozen of the Grays were upon him.

He fought madly, but in vain. He was quickly overpowered. His arms were bound behind him.

Will turned to the lovers, and said:

"Have you any desire to witness the execution?"

Enid shuddered, and averted her face.

"Oh, no! It is too horrible!" she said.

"He is the monster who shot your poor old grandfather and threw his body into the flames!" said Karl.

"Yet I cannot witness his death. Oh, it is awful! War is awful!"

"You are right," said Will, with white face. "It is hard for me to take a human life. But if I were to spare him he would continue his murderous career."

"It's a stern necessity," said Karl. "He must die!"

When Myrick was led out of the old tavern the light of day was just glimmering in the east. Nearby was a tall oak.

Over a high limb a rope was thrown. The Grays formed a square about it. In the center and beneath the noose stood the doomed wretch.

Joe Spotswood placed the noose over the guerrilla's neck. Fred Randolph had charge of the execution.

When the Grays rode away from Myers' Tavern a little later they left behind them all that was mortal of a human fiend, who had ravaged the country about Richmond in a lawless way.

The Grays were soon galloping away upon their return to Magruder's camp. The air was close and sultry, but to two people, at least, in that cavalcade, it was glorious.

When well upon the Newmarket road, rein was drawn.

Here it was arranged that Enid should be sent to Richmond. Will detailed an escort, among whom was Karl Merton.

"Captain Prentiss," said Enid, in a broken voice, "may heaven forever bless you for all you have done for me. I shall never forget your kindness."

Merton wrung Will's hand, saying:

"Bless you, Prentiss! I shall see you again, for I am coming back to recruit my company."

"I shall always be glad to hear from and see you both," said Will. "I wish you both much joy."

Then the Grays galloped on. They were soon cutting across the country to the main road to Savage's Station.

As they rode on Will gave an exclamation.

"What is that?" he cried. "Our division has moved; they are no longer in front of the Union lines."

"Perhaps the Union lines have moved," said Fred Randolph. At this moment a man on horseback dashed out of a covert near.

He drew rein at sight of the Grays.

"Hello!" exclaimed Will. "It's Stanton, the scout. Let us hear what he has to say."

The scout drew near, and Will hailed him. A moment more they were shaking hands.

"I thought you looked like a company of our people," said Stanton. "Where have you been?"

"We have just hanged Myrick."

"What, the guerrilla?"

"Yes."

"Whew! You have done a big thing. He is a thorn in the flesh for all our generals. By the way, are you not going in the wrong direction?"

"We are going to Magruder's camp."

"He is no longer at Savage's Station. Have you not heard the news?"

"What news?"

"Sumner gave him the slip in the night and marched through the swamp. Magruder has been ordered to advance down the Charles City road. We are ordered to drive McClellan into the James. It is expected that his whole army will be wiped out to-day. President Davis and his staff have come up from Richmond to see it."

Will and his companions were truly astonished at this bit of news. It put a new face on matters. At once they changed their line of march.

They bore away down the Charles City road, and after a swift gallop overtook the wagon trains of Magruder's division.

The Grays galloped past these and next encountered the rear guard. They passed this, and soon the long marching lines of the army were seen.

Upon a little eminence to one side Will saw a little group of mounted officers. He recognized them at once as General Magruder's staff.

The Grays galloped to the base of the eminence and drew up in line. Will and Fred rode to the summit and dismounted.

They approached General Magruder and his staff on foot.

Will saluted, and the general, with an eager exclamation, dismounted, and advanced to meet the boy captain.

"Prentiss," he cried, "I have been thinking about you all the morning. What luck have you had?"

"The work is done," said Will, in a simple manner.

"Yes, I know. Colonel Bell has reported to me with the prisoners. But what of Myrick?"

"His career is over."

"What—you captured him?"

"Yes, and hung him to the nearest tree," replied Will. "I hope I did not exceed my authority?"

"Those were my orders," said General Magruder. "You have done well, Prentiss, and you are entitled to great credit."

"I am again awaiting your orders," said Will.

"Your command has had but little sleep. I can send you to the rear and give you a few hours' rest. You can come up later."

"What move is on now, general?" asked the boy captain.

"This is to be the greatest day of the war," said General Magruder. "I will explain the situation to you. McClellan's army is extended in a long line of eight miles. Longstreet and Hill are on the other side, marching parallel. Myself and General Huger are on this side.

"We intend to strike the center of that line at a point below here. By piercing it we shall divide his army and totally destroy it. This will be a proud day for the Confederacy!"

"Then," cried Will, "not one of my boys will think of rest. We want to participate in this great movement. Please order us to some point as near the front as possible."

"No," said General Magruder, with sudden thought. "You are an independent company and not attached to any particular division."

"That is true."

"Then I shall leave the matter to you to do as you choose. Select your own position. But I must reserve the right to call upon you for any special work that may need to be done."

"You shall have a quick response," replied Will.

"One thing more, Prentiss."

"Yes, sir."

"How about that young captain, Merton, and the young woman he was in love with? Did he find her all safe?"

"Both are safely on their way to Richmond now, sir. We rescued her from Myrick at Myers' Tavern."

"Ah! I am glad to hear of that!"

General Magruder saluted and turned away. Will returned to his Grays.

In a few words he explained matters to them fully. The result was just what he expected.

There was a unanimous vote to go ahead without rest.

"We will rest after the Yankees are whipped," cried one of the boys. He was cheered loudly.

So the Grays galloped away, and soon were assigned a position in the line of march.

But Magruder's division moved slowly. There was interminable delay by some of the brigade commanders, and finally Will and his Grays asked permission to be detached on scouting duty.

So they galloped away down the Central road. After going some distance they hit upon a great surprise.

Down side roads and across the fields came regiments of troops. The young captain of the Grays was curious to know what it meant.

But he soon learned the truth.

Longstreet and Hill, by special orders, had crossed down the Central road and were ordered to hit the flank of McClellan's army. The same orders relegated Magruder and Huger to a detour by a lower road.

It did not take Will long to decide to attach himself to Longstreet's army. He at once fell into line.

"We want to be in the van of this attack," he said. "Longstreet will be the first in, so we will remain with him."

And it so happened that the Grays joined Longstreet's column, which was to see some of the most desperate fighting of the war.

As the Grays fell in, they turned their horses over to the cavalry guard and resumed their position again as infantry. They were marching bravely along in the line when a young officer dashed down the line.

At sight of Will he rode up and gave a salute. A great cry broke from the boy captain.

"Karl Merton!" he gasped.

"At your service, Captain Prentiss."

"But—have you been to Richmond?"

"Yes, and back. I left Enid in safe hands. I knew every man would be needed at the front to-day, so I came back poste-haste. I have been assigned to a position on General Longstreet's staff!"

"I am glad to hear it. Then we shall meet often."

"I hope so!"

After a warm hand-shake Merton rode on. Now firing

was heard in the front and the Grays were among those ordered up. They went forward on the double-quick.

The fifth day's fighting before Richmond had begun. The Grays were ready and were destined to figure brilliantly in the battle.

Of their advantages and how they distinguished themselves we shall have to write in another story. With this

announcement we will beg to take leave for the present of Captain Will Prentiss and his Virginia Grays.

THE END.

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